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DEMOCRATIC STEERING AND POLICY COMMITTEE

Congress of the United States House of Representatives

January 29, 2018

The Honorable Kirstjen M. Nielsen
Secretary
Department of Homeland Security
300 7th Street, SW
Washington, D.C. 20024

Dear Secretary Nielsen:

In light of the Administration deciding to imperil the lives of tens of thousands of people in the United States as Temporary Protected Status (TPS) beneficiaries, I write to urge you to extend the existing TPS for Syrian nationals (and individuals without nationality who last habitually resided in Syria) because it is still unsafe for those individuals to return to Syria due to ongoing civil war. TPS designation has allowed Syrians to reside in and be physically present in the United States since March 29, 2012. This status was granted because the ongoing armed conflict in the region contributed to a deterioration of the country and a severe disruption of living conditions.

Since the conflict in Syria began, more than 5.4 million people have fled the bombs and bullets that have devastated their home country. Millions more have been displaced inside Syria's borders. President Bashar al-Assad's regime has shown no interest in relenting in his crusade to dismantle his country and destroy the future for millions of Syrians. This continuing threat coupled with the presence of the Islamic State has caused widespread insecurity for Syrians. Finally, the civil war has created a brutal and violent environment in which international humanitarian organizations have faced severe obstacles to access to cities across Syria.

The ongoing civil war in Syria has continued to prevent individuals from returning safely home. Given that basic humanitarian assistance -- including medical care, food, and supplies -- is often unavailable for those in need of relief, Syrians face serious danger in returning home. Extending TPS for Syrians recognizes that the conditions that led to the initial TPS designation have not positively changed, and in many ways have worsened. Further, when former Homeland Security Secretary Janet Napolitano granted TPS, it was made clear that DHS would conduct full background checks on Syrians registering for TPS. As a result, there should be no security concern with allowing Syrians who received TPS to continue to remain in the United States.

The ongoing civil war in Syria has created extraordinary conditions that prevent Syrian nationals from safely returning home. I await your assurance that critical TPS benefits for Syrians will be extended ahead of March 31, 2018.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Bill Pascrell Jr." The signature is written in a cursive style with a prominent initial "B" and a stylized "Jr." at the end.

Bill Pascrell, Jr.
Member of Congress