



## OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

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SPRINGFIELD, ILLINOIS 62706

**JB PRITZKER**  
GOVERNOR

April 10, 2024

The Honorable Joseph R. Biden, Jr.  
President  
1600 Pennsylvania Ave., NW  
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President,

I would first like to extend my appreciation for your ongoing compassion for the individuals and families seeking asylum in the United States. I also applaud your leadership with Congress to try to bring new resources and sound policies to the complex global challenges and opportunities that drive migration. While legislative efforts have stalled, I ask you again to use your authority to extend Temporary Protected Status (TPS) for Venezuelan migrants, and I also join the call of the “Here to Work” coalition of business leaders and immigration advocates to request that you create a pathway to legal status and employment authorization documents (EADs) for long-term undocumented individuals.

As you know, the TPS designation shields eligible individuals from deportation and provides them with the critical opportunity to immediately qualify for work authorization. Here in Illinois, we have seen the impact this extension has had firsthand in helping individuals reach self-sufficiency as we manage crisis responses to welcome thousands of asylum seekers from the southern border. This policy lever has the potential to be especially effective in Chicago and Illinois, where, according to our data, we receive a disproportionate number of Venezuelan new arrivals when compared to the total demographics of southern border arrivals. Through incredibly successful large-scale workshops with on-site processing by USCIS, we have been able to assist over 5,500 new arrivals in submitting expedited work authorization applications to date, including the almost 2,500 current shelter residents who now have employment authorization and a pathway to self-sufficiency.

However, the ongoing impact of TPS is severely limited by the current July 31<sup>st</sup>, 2023 arrival date eligibility restriction. Chicago and Illinois began to receive the highest share of new arrivals of any major interior receiving city between September 1<sup>st</sup>, 2023 and January 31<sup>st</sup>, 2024 – a significant surge that represented a threefold increase over the previous 4 months. Additionally, despite an ever-growing shelter census that currently supports almost 10,000 individuals, we have begun scaling down our TPS and EAD clinic efforts, as less and less eligible individuals remain. Alternatively, we estimate that if TPS eligibility for Venezuelans was expanded to permit an arrival date on or before April 1, 2024, almost 83% of current shelter residents would be eligible for TPS or EADs.

Your administration understands that extending work permits to these individuals not only allows them to support their families while seeking refuge in the US, but also provides a clear public benefit by allowing them to avail their skills, dedication, and hard work to the US economy.

Today, we build upon this call to further extend TPS eligibility and write to ask that you use your statutory authority to also create a pathway to legal status and work authorization for long-term undocumented immigrants — a community that has poured their hearts and souls into making a better life for themselves and their families in the United States, and whose contributions to the American economy are irreplaceable.

Immigrants contribute measurable economic and social benefits to states throughout our nation. Undocumented immigrants collectively pay an estimated [\\$11.74 billion a year](#) in taxes, despite not being eligible to benefit from many of the programs their tax dollars support.

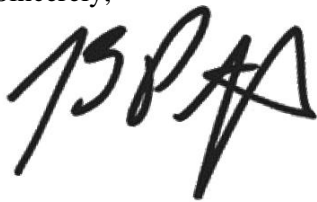
Beyond economic impact, these individuals are integral to our country and our communities. More than [1.1 million US citizens](#) are married to an undocumented spouse and [nearly 5.5 million children who are US citizens](#) live with an undocumented household member.

We applauded the Biden administration for using parole authority to welcome Afghan refugees fleeing the Taliban, and Ukrainian immigrants escaping the Russian invasion, allowing individuals to stay and work in the United States during humanitarian crises in their beloved home countries. Similarly, we cheered when your administration recently extended this policy to eligible individuals from Cuba, Haiti, Nicaragua, Venezuela, and Ecuador.

From new arrivals to decades-long residents, immigrants are valued members of communities across our country. They add tremendous value to the social and economic fabric of our great nation as neighbors, taxpayers, workers, consumers, and entrepreneurs. When legal work authorizations are extended to long-term undocumented communities, formally recognizing their irreplaceable, positive impacts on the US economy and American society, they will contribute even more to the nation they have embraced as home for years.

We urge you to use the tools at your disposal, Mr. President, to expand TPS eligibility for new arrivals and formally cement long-term immigrants' status within the United States workforce.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'JP', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Governor JB Pritzker

cc: Vice President Kamala Harris  
Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer (D-NY)  
House Minority Leader Hakeem Jeffries (D-NY)