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United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN RELATIONS

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-6225

February 25, 2021

His Excellency Iván Duque Márquez
President of the Republic of Colombia
Palacio de Nariño Carrera 8 #7 – 26,
Bogotá, Cundinamarca, Colombia

Dear President Duque:

I write to commend your recent decision to grant Temporary Protected Status to Venezuelan refugees and migrants in Colombia. As millions of Venezuelans have fled the political, economic, and humanitarian crisis that has ravaged their country, your decision is bound to save lives, restore dignity, enhance security, and reinforce Colombia's role as a global leader. The United States, through our support for international humanitarian organizations, remains a steadfast partner in addressing the region's refugee and migration challenges.

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees estimates that approximately 5.4 million people have fled Venezuela, leading to one of the largest migration and refugee crisis in the world. As I saw first-hand during my visit in July 2019, Colombia hosts the largest number of these refugees and migrants in South America, welcoming more than 1.7 million to date. In this context, your government's decision to provide 10-year Temporary Protected Status for Venezuelan refugees and migrants will benefit up to one million Venezuelan citizens who are currently living in Colombia without proper documentation—compelling them to emerge from the shadows and access work opportunities and essential services. Given the far reaching impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, the regularization process proposed by your administration is a vital step toward ensuring the protection of the most vulnerable, enabling them to rebuild their lives.

During the last two years, I have championed efforts to provide Temporary Protected Status to eligible Venezuelans in the United States, and I plan to work closely with President Biden and his administration to bring this effort to fruition. As the United States, Colombia, and the international community work together in support of the Venezuelan people's pursuit to restore democracy and rebuild their country, it is imperative to provide protection to those who have been forced to flee the brutality and misery of the Maduro regime. To that end, I once again applaud Colombia for its solidarity with the people of Venezuela, and thank you for your leadership on this important matter.

Sincerely,



Robert Menendez
Chairman