Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

May 30, 2014

The Honorable Barack H. Obama
President of the United States
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

We write to strongly urge you to direct the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) to create a Haitian Family Reunification Parole Program in order to save lives and accelerate Haiti's recovery efforts. This would allow Haitians with approved family-based visa petitions to come to the United States while they await their visas.

Tragically, over 200,000 Haitians were killed and millions more were affected by the catastrophic 7.0 magnitude earthquake that struck Haiti on January 12, 2010. The devastation left Haiti's infrastructure severely compromised and its citizens vulnerable. Over four years later, approximately 150,000 Haitians still live under deplorable conditions in the country's infamous tent camps, and tens of thousands have had no other alternative but to live in unsafe, makeshift shelters that comprise the informal settlements around Port-au-Prince. In addition, while the United Nations (UN) has played an important role in the post-earthquake recovery effort, it has failed to adequately address and take responsibility for a deadly cholera outbreak that has killed more than 8,500 Haitians and sickened more than 700,000 since October of 2010.

Furthermore, many media reports have documented what the U.S. Coast Guard knows all too well. Desperate Haitians are increasingly abandoned and dying at sea as they resort to smugglers to cross perilous routes in search of a better life, including the notoriously treacherous 80-mile-wide Mona Passage strait toward Puerto Rico. According to Captain Mark Fedor, Chief of Enforcement of the U.S. Coast Guard's Seventh District in Miami, "[the smugglers] want to get the run done and collect their money…there's probably a lot of death we don't know about."

As of November 1, 2013, DHS had approved family-based immigrant visa petitions for 109,489. However, due to arbitrary per country limits, they unconscionably remain on waiting lists of up to more than 12 years in Haiti. Your administration can take immediate steps to save and improve lives by allowing Haitians who have already been approved to join their families in the United States.



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The Cuban Family Reunification Parole Program, which was created by DHS in 2007 and subsequently renewed by your administration, has successfully paroled tens of thousands of approved Cuban participants into the United States. Creating a Haitian Family Reunification Parole Program would not only save lives and reunite families, but empower individuals to actively assist in Haiti's recovery. Haitians remit about $2 billion annually, mostly from the diaspora in the United States, and Haitian parolees would be able to obtain work permits and send much-needed remittances back to Haiti.

The creation of a Haitian Family Reunification Parole Program is supported by 100 Members of Congress from both parties, 10 major editorial boards in at least 17 editorials, the New York and Philadelphia city councils, the U.S. Conference of Mayors, American Bar Association, Miami-Dade County Commission, Congressional Black Caucus (CBC), National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), Massachusetts Governor Deval Patrick, and thousands of petitioners.

Thank you for your attention to this urgent matter. The people of Haiti are incredibly resilient and eager to take control of their future. We therefore urge you to put an end to the indefinite waiting lists as soon as possible through the creation of a Haitian Family Reunification Parole Program.

Sincerely,

Alcee L. Hastings
Member of Congress

Mario Diaz-Balart
Member of Congress

John Conyers, Jr.
Member of Congress

Charles B. Rangel
Member of Congress

George Miller
Member of Congress

John Lewis
Member of Congress

Frank Pallone, Jr.
Member of Congress

Eliot L. Engel
Member of Congress

Jim McDermott
Member of Congress

Ileana Ros-Lehtinen
Member of Congress

James P. Moran
Member of Congress

Eleanor Holmes Norton
Member of Congress

Maxine Waters
Member of Congress

Jerrold Nadler
Member of Congress

Sanford D. Bishop, Jr.
Member of Congress

Corrine Brown
Member of Congress

Luis V. Gutiérrez
Member of Congress

Eddie Bernice Johnson
Member of Congress

Lucille Roybal-Allard
Member of Congress

Bobby L. Rush
Member of Congress

Bennie G. Thompson
Member of Congress

Chaka Fattah
Member of Congress

Sheila Jackson Lee
Member of Congress

Zoe Lofgren
Member of Congress

Earl Blumenauer
Member of Congress

Donna M. Christensen
Member of Congress

Danny K. Davis
Member of Congress

James P. McGovern
Member of Congress

Gregory W. Meeks
Member of Congress

John F. Tierney
Member of Congress

Barbara Lee
Member of Congress

Michael E. Capuano
Member of Congress

Janice D. Schakowsky
Member of Congress

Wm. Lacy Clay
Member of Congress

Michael M. Honda
Member of Congress

Raúl M. Grijalva
Member of Congress

David Scott
Member of Congress

Emanuel Cleaver
Member of Congress

Al Green
Member of Congress

Gwen Moore
Member of Congress

Debbie Wasserman Schultz
Member of Congress

Albio Sires
Member of Congress

Kathy Castor
Member of Congress

Yvette D. Clarke
Member of Congress

Steve Cohen
Member of Congress

Henry C. "Hank" Johnson, Jr.
Member of Congress

Peter Welch
Member of Congress

Andre Carson
Member of Congress

Theodore E. Deutch
Member of Congress

Karen Bass
Member of Congress

William R. Keating
Member of Congress

Cedric L. Richmond
Member of Congress

Frederica S. Wilson
Member of Congress

Donald M. Payne, Jr.
Member of Congress

Matt Cartwright
Member of Congress

Lois Frankel
Member of Congress

Joe Garcia
Member of Congress

Robin L. Kelly
Member of Congress

Mark Pocan
Member of Congress

Marc A. Veasey
Member of Congress

Elijah E. Cummings
Member of Congress

José E. Serrano
Member of Congress

Donna F. Edwards
Member of Congress

Cc:

The Honorable Jeh Johnson
Secretary, U.S. Department of Homeland Security

The Honorable John Kerry
Secretary, U.S. Department of State