



Family Action Network Movement
100 NE 84th Street, Miami, FL 33138
Phone: 305-756-8050
www.fanm.org

Testimony of Rony Ponthieux
TPS Holder
Family Action Network Movement

I want to start by thanking Senator and Chair of the Judiciary Committee, Dick Durbin, and his phenomenal staff for your leadership and this opportunity. Next, I would like to thank and greet Ranking Member Senator Chuck Grassley and the other important committee members.

My name is Rony Ponthieux, I'm a Haitian immigrant, a worker with Temporary Protected Status, a registered nurse and essential worker during COVID-19. I am also a member of Family Action Network Movement (FANM).

First of all, I would like to thank the Almighty for protecting me during the pandemic period. I would also like to send some words of comfort to those who lost their loved ones, a family member, or a friend. The fight against Coronavirus will be over soon, do not give up but be strong, and the best is yet to come.

I work at Jackson Memorial Hospital's COVID-19 battleground, where I save lives every day. I've been here for 22 years now, since 1999, and since 2006, I've been a nurse. I'm currently working for Jackson Memorial Hospital in a unit specialized for COVID-19. Again, I put my life in danger and on the line to save American lives.

The COVID-19 pandemic has impacted every level of the U.S. economy with unprecedented challenges. We are in a war. And the enemy is not another country. It is the virus -- the Coronavirus. Many TPS holders and Dreamers are healthcare providers, soldiers in this fight against COVID-19. I'm one of them. And I'm asking the U.S. government to permit me to remain here with permanent residency.

I came to the U.S. 22 years ago with my wife, Marjorie Ponthieux, and we have established our lives here. I was granted Temporary Protected Status (TPS) by immigration officials when the earthquake left Haiti in shambles a decade ago. Since we first came to the U.S., my wife and I have had two children, put ourselves through nursing school, and bought a house in Miami-Dade. My son, a U.S.-born citizen, is an E4 specialist in the Army. My family risks their lives for this country. So we have served this country and feel that we are Americans, but our immigration status has remained temporary.

Given the contributions of TPS holders to this country, I respectfully urge the U.S. Senate to support the Dream and Promise Act that includes a pathway to permanency for immigrant youth and Temporary Protected Status holders.

First, I respectfully request that nationals of a country that has or had a Temporary Protected Status designation be permitted to obtain permanent resident status. Over 55,000 TPS recipients are from Haiti. Currently, 14 percent of TPS holders live in Florida. More than 100,000 Haitian nationals will benefit from the 2021 designation of TPS for Haiti. Immigrants are an integral part of the country's diverse and thriving communities. We are members of organizations, neighborhoods, and work associations. We are the backbone of the country's recovery, and we are saving lives during the pandemic.

I speak for many TPS holders when I say that it would be extremely difficult for my family and me to be forced to leave after 20 years of living in the United States and return to a country in shambles. I have to think daily about saving lives and taking care of my family, but in addition to that, I have to think about the possibility of leaving the United States eventually if I am not granted permanent status.

Keep Families Together. TPS holders play an active role in our children's lives-- we attend the school meetings, recitals, and sports games. As of 2017, 273 thousand children have parents with TPS Status. Over 50 thousand of these children live in Florida. Help parents provide for their children and families. If permanency is not granted, our children would face serious risks. They would be forced to face separation from their parents or be forced to relocate to a foreign country. The fear of family separation and deportation of parents will cause long-standing traumas in the lives of our children.

Allow immigrants to contribute to the U.S. We make contributions that benefit all. Help beneficiaries of TPS continue contributing to our society and not be a burden to the Government. Permanent status will allow TPS recipients to be more productive, continue paying more taxes. They could get a higher education. We can make America a better place to live. We are workers, business owners, taxpayers. Thirty percent of TPS holders are homeowners who add to our local economies through sales and property taxes.

My message to this administration, the Government, and Senate is to think about fair treatment for TPS holders. Now is not the time to play politics- we need real solutions. We believe in

your compassion, your understanding, your good judgment, and, more importantly, your leadership. We believe you will make the Dream and Promise Act a reality. More than 300,000 TPS holders are waiting. More than 270,000 U.S born children are waiting.

Let's work together, Democrats and Republicans, to have immigration reform that will change the lives of millions. TPS recipients will keep their end of the bargain by working hard, paying taxes, contributing to build the social, economic, and political fabric of this great nation. It is time for Congress to do its part.

May God bless you, May God bless America.

Thank you very much.