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Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-1005
March 29, 2018

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The Honorable Kirstjen M. Nielsen
Secretary
U.S. Department of Homeland Security
500 12th Street, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20528

Dear Secretary Nielsen:

I respectfully write to urge you to extend Deferred Enforced Departure (DED) for Liberians legally living in the United States. An extension of at least three years will ease anxiety and uncertainty in communities across the United States and in Liberia.

Decades of war and disease ravaged Liberia, which continues to face enormous challenges rebuilding its economy and infrastructure. In 1991, President George H. W. Bush granted Temporary Protected Status (TPS) to Liberians fleeing violence during the First Liberian Civil War. Sadly, Liberia's two civil wars lasted for more than 11 years combined and left hundreds of thousands dead from untold atrocities. The United States played an integral role in supporting a multinational effort to end the civil conflict and provide refuge to those escaping the horrors of war.

The pathway to peace and prosperity continues to be precarious. Survivors endured severe food, water, and health care shortages, pressures only magnified by the Ebola outbreak in 2014. Previous administrations' decisions to extend both TPS and DED allowed Liberians to build safe and stable homesteads, contribute to our nation's economy, and support their families and friends. As you know, this vital humanitarian lifeline is set to expire on March 31, 2018.

The United States remains a beacon for those Liberians who sought refuge and solace during the darkest of days. Metro Atlanta in particular is a hub for the Liberian-American community. These hard-working taxpayers not only contribute to our country, but they also helped rebuild Liberia, a country for which an abrupt end of DED would jeopardize the recent political and economic progress.

As always, I appreciate your consideration of my concerns about this grave matter. The United States must continue to do all it can to help Liberia recover, to protect our investments in peacekeeping and economic relief, and to foster security in West Africa. Extending DED provides the necessary stability and relief that Liberia needs while protecting the dignity and the worth of our friends and neighbors.

Sincerely,

John Lewis
Member of Congress

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SCANNED/RECEIVED
BY EXEC SEC



**U.S. Citizenship
and Immigration
Services**

April 25, 2018

The Honorable John Lewis
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative Lewis:

Thank you for your March 29, 2018 letter. Secretary Nielsen asked that I respond on her behalf.

Deferred Enforced Departure (DED) is a temporary deferral of removal that may be authorized by the President for a designated group of foreign nationals. The only group of foreign nationals currently authorized for DED is Liberians who held Temporary Protected Status (TPS) when a prior TPS designation of Liberia terminated on September 30, 2007. Former President George W. Bush originally authorized DED for this group of Liberians nationals on October 1, 2007 because although conditions in Liberia had improved to a point where the statutorily required conditions supporting a TPS designation were no longer met, President Bush determined that the political and economic situation in the country justified permitting those with expiring TPS status to remain in the United States consistent with the foreign policy interests of the United States. Presidents Bush and Obama continuously extended the DED authorization for this class of Liberian nationals. Approximately 840 individuals applied for and received DED-based Employment Authorization Documents during the last 18-month extension period that ended on March 31, 2018.

On March 27, 2018, President Trump announced his decision that conditions in Liberia no longer warrant a further extension of DED, but that the foreign policy interests of the United States warrant affording an orderly transition (“wind-down”) period to Liberian DED beneficiaries. Accordingly, President Trump provided a 12-month wind-down period, which runs through March 31, 2019 in order to give the Liberian Government time to reintegrate its returning citizens and to allow DED beneficiaries who are not eligible for other forms of immigration relief to make necessary arrangements and to depart the United States.

More information regarding the 12-month wind-down period for Liberian DED can be found in the Presidential Memorandum for the Secretary of State and the Secretary of Homeland Security issued on March 27, 2018, which is available at <https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/presidential-memorandum-secretary-state-secretary-homeland-security/>. Details regarding work authorization for current Liberian DED beneficiaries throughout the wind-down period can be found in the Federal Register notice published on March 30, 2018 (83 FR 13767), and on the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) website under “DED Granted Country – Liberia.”

Thank you again for your letter and interest in this important issue. Should you require any additional assistance, please have your staff contact the USCIS Office of Legislative Affairs at (202) 272-1940.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "L. Francis Cissna". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

L. Francis Cissna
Director