



International Refugee
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The Honorable Alejandro Mayorkas
Secretary of Homeland Security
U.S. Department of Homeland Security
301 7th Street, SW2
Washington, D.C. 20528

Tracy Renaud
Senior Official Performing the Duties of the Director
U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services
Department of Homeland Security
20 Massachusetts Ave, NW
Washington, D.C. 20529

February 22, 2021

Dear Secretary Mayorkas and Ms. Renaud:

We write regarding actions taken by the Department of Homeland Security and U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) to terminate the Haitian Family Reunification Program (HFRP) and Filipino World War II Veteran Parole Program (FWVP). Most recently, on December 28, 2020, USCIS requested comments to a proposed revision of an ongoing information collection, necessary to terminate HFRP and FWVP and revise instructions for USCIS Form I-131 to remove references to those programs.¹ **We ask that you withdraw this proposal and continue both HFRP and FWVP, as well as consider additional humanitarian parole programs in line with directives laid out in Executive Order 14013**, which directs that the policy of the Administration shall be that: “United States humanitarian programs should be administered in a manner that ... reflects the principle that reunifying families is in the national interest” and “[e]xecutive departments and agencies...should explore the use

¹ Department of Homeland Security, Notice of and Request for Comment on “Agency Information Collection Activities; Revision, of a Currently Approved Collection: Application for Travel Document. Removal of Instructions Regarding the Haitian Family Reunification Program and the Filipino World War II Veteran Parole Program,” USCIS-2007-0045, OMB Control Number 1615-0013 (Dec. 28, 2020), 85 F.R. 84362, <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/FR-2020-12-28/pdf/2020-28475.pdf>.



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of all available authorities for humanitarian protection to assist individuals for whom USRAP is unavailable.”²

USCIS attempted to justify the termination of HFRP and FWVP as pursuant to former President Donald J. Trump’s Executive Order 13767 and then-Secretary John Kelly’s subsequent implementation memorandum, the latter of which USCIS used to announce its intention to end these humanitarian programs on August 2, 2019.³ Notwithstanding USCIS’ faulty and incorrect conjecture that “the expedited processing that was made available to these populations in a categorical fashion” was inconsistent with the law, President Biden has since the December 28, 2020 Federal Register Notice revoked Executive Order 13767. He has also ordered the Secretary of Homeland Security to “promptly take steps to rescind any agency memoranda or guidance issued in reliance on or in furtherance of” the revoked Executive Order.⁴

These two parole programs are important pathways to family reunification for the Haitian and Filipino communities in the United States. DHS established the HFRP program to reunite long separated families, while waiting for immigrant visas to become available - thereby also supporting Haiti’s long-term post-earthquake reconstruction and development.⁵ The FWVP program was similarly created to recognize the contributions of Filipino veterans who fought for the United States during World War II and allow families to reunite to care for their elderly veterans and veterans’ spouses, while waiting for

² Executive Order 14013, “Rebuilding and Enhancing Programs To Resettle Refugees and Planning for the Impact of Climate Change on Migration” (Feb. 4, 2021) at Section 1(h), <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/presidential-actions/2021/02/04/executive-order-on-rebuilding-and-enhancing-programs-to-resettle-refugees-and-planning-for-the-impact-of-climate-change-on-migration/>.

³ U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, News Release, “USCIS to End Certain Categorical Parole Programs” (Aug. 2, 2019), <https://www.uscis.gov/news/news-releases/uscis-to-end-certain-categorical-parole-programs>.

⁴ Executive Order 14013, *supra* note 2, at Section 2.

⁵ Department of Homeland Security, Notice, “Implementation of Haitian Family Reunification Parole Program,” DHS Docket No. USCIS-2014-0013 (Dec. 18, 2014), 79 F.R. 75581, <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/FR-2014-12-18/pdf/2014-29533.pdf>.



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immigrant visas to become available.⁶ Beneficiaries of both programs are family members of U.S. permanent residents or citizens and have already been approved to immigrate to the United States; HFRP and FWVP protect these vulnerable groups from prolonged family separations due to interminable wait times.

Both of these important programs adhere in full faith to the policy principles of family unity and humanitarian protection laid out by President Biden in Executive Order 14013. In light of this and the revocation of Executive Order 13767, we strongly urge you to withdraw your December 28, 2020 Notice, as well as any other steps taken to terminate HFRP and FWVP, and give full consideration to additional similar humanitarian parole programs.

Should you wish to discuss this matter or require further information, please contact Sunil Varghese at svarghese@refugeerights.org or Elizabeth Foydel at efoydel@refugeerights.org.

Sincerely,

International Refugee Assistance Project

cc: Felicia Escobar, Chief of Staff, USCIS
Amanda Baran, Chief, Office of Policy and Strategy

⁶ Department of Homeland Security, Notice, "Filipino World War II Veterans Parole Policy," DHS Docket No. USCIS-2016-0003 (May 9, 2016), 81 F.R. 28097, <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/FR-2016-05-09/pdf/2016-10750.pdf>.