

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

September 16, 2019

The Honorable Kevin K. McAleenan
Acting Secretary
U.S. Department of Homeland Security
Washington, DC 20528

Dear Acting Secretary McAleenan:

We are writing concerning the Bahamian refugees forced from their homes by Hurricane Dorian. Since the storm devastated the Bahamas and displaced people began to flee, there have been numerous troubling reports regarding the Administration's treatment of these survivors. We are asking you to utilize all authorities at your disposal as Acting Secretary of Homeland Security, including humanitarian parole and Temporary Protected Status for our Bahamian neighbors affected by this catastrophic storm.

As you know, the Bahamas, particularly the Abaco Islands and Grand Bahama, were devastated by Hurricane Dorian, an extremely slow-moving category five storm that brought strong winds, rain, and storm surge.¹ According to the Bahamian government, at least 50 people have died from the storm, and that number is expected to rise significantly, as thousands are still missing and search and rescue operations continue.²

Although the storm has moved on, the situation on the ground is still dire. According to the United Nations, some 70,000 people are in need of food and shelter,³ and initial reports estimate that 45 percent of the homes on Grand Bahama and Abaco were severely damaged or destroyed. While the humanitarian need is great, response activities so far have been hindered on the islands due to the magnitude of damage to critical infrastructure.⁴ As such, the impacted areas are uninhabitable, and people are desperate to recover from the storm. The destruction has prompted many survivors to travel to the U.S. to escape the devastation in their homeland.

Existing law and policy provide authorities for just such a situation. In particular, humanitarian parole allows the Department to admit people temporarily for humanitarian reasons, with proper screening, and Temporary Protected Status designation would allow Bahamians already present in the U.S. to remain until conditions at home are suitable for their return.

¹ Tim Stelloh, "More Hurricane Dorian deaths confirmed in the Bahamas," *NBC News*, 9 September 2019. Available at: <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/world/hurricane-dorian-grows-deadlier-more-fatalities-confirmed-bahamas-n1051766>.

² The Associated Press, "Hurricane Dorian Death Toll Rises to 50 in Bahamas," *Bloomberg*, 10 September 2019. Available at: <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2019-09-10/the-latest-dorian-death-toll-rises-to-50-in-the-bahamas>.

³ "Hurricane Dorian: Bahamas defends response amid criticism," *BBC News*, 9 September 2019. Available at: <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-latin-america-49629850>.

⁴ "The Bahamas – Hurricane Dorian Fact Sheet #2, (FY) 2019," USAID, 5 September 2019. Available at: <https://www.usaid.gov/crisis/dorian/fy19/fs2>.

We are not requesting any change in policy, nor are we suggesting that new procedures should be put in place in response to this humanitarian crisis. We ask that you take full advantage of your agency's discretion and available resources in order to aid the Bahamian people. Thank you for your prompt attention to this matter.

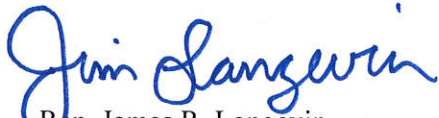
Sincerely,



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Member of Congress



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Member of Congress



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Member of Congress



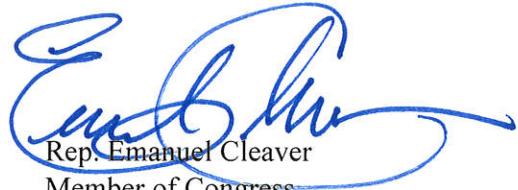
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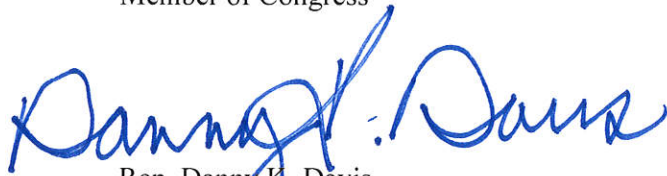

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