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Payne Delighted with Administration's Announcement to Extend DED for Liberian Immigrants and Raised Need to Grant Permanent Residency to Eligible Liberian Refugees Washington, D.C. – Rep. Donald M. Payne, Jr. hosted the Liberian National Immigration Conference in conjunction with the Liberian Pastors Association to express support for Liberians in the U.S. and to highlight the need for an immediate extension of the Deferred Enforced Departure (DED). Extension of DED for the approximately 3,600 eligible Liberians living in the United States was announced by Denise Vanison, DHS Chief, Office of Policy and Strategy [pictured top left], at the conference. The extension provides an additional 18 months of temporary legal status for the thousands of Liberian refugees living in the United States.



The extension of DED was critical to the economy of many metropolitan areas that are now home to a large Liberian population. Additionally, Liberia is not equipped to handle the return of thousands of Liberians who have lived in the U.S. for over a decade. Liberians living in the U.S. remit more than \$6 million a month to Liberia, and the deportation of Liberians would devastate the Liberian economy. The Conference highlighted the need to incorporate the issues affecting Afro-immigrants into the overall conversation surrounding comprehensive immigration reform. Recently, Senator Jack Reed of Rhode Island and Rep. Keith Ellison (MN-5) introduced legislation, S. 656 and H.R. 1087 respectively, titled the Liberian Refugee Immigration Fairness Act that would provide permanent residency to eligible Liberian immigrants. "Today's conference was an enormous success, and I was thrilled that Obama Administration official, Denise Vanison, announced the Administration's decision to extend DED status at the conference," said Rep. Payne, Jr. "This is a joyous day and a great step forward for Liberian immigrants. Nevertheless, our conference drew attention to the fact that DED remains a flawed policy as Liberian immigrants wait in limbo every 18 months wondering whether they will be deported. Providing permanent residency for Liberian immigrants must be incorporated into the larger conversation surrounding comprehensive immigration reform, and I will continue to be an outspoken advocate on this issue."

Many Liberian immigrants fled to our nation from a brutal civil war in pursuit of the American Dream, just like so many of our parents, grandparents, and ancestors before us. Many Liberian refugees have been here for more than 20 years and are second generation immigrants. They have painstakingly rebuilt their lives following the trauma of war. They are part of our social and economic fabric. They are our pastors, teachers, professors, community leaders, and deporting a large number of them could economically hurt cities and communities where a large number of Liberian immigrants have settled.

Liberian Ambassador Jeremiah C. Sulunteh said, "Liberia is a small America. We are proud to live that way."

Liberia is not prepared for the deportation of thousands of Liberian-American immigrants. We don't have the resources, the infrastructure, or the capability. I commend Representative Donald Payne, Jr. for hosting the conference and adding your voice to the many voices speaking out for Liberian immigrants."Members of Congress and experts in the field of Liberian Immigration gave remarks regarding the concerns surrounding Liberian Immigration as well as the need for comprehensive immigration reform.Rep. Bass, Chair of Subcommittee on Africa, Committee on Foreign Affairs said, "Today's discussion is important to elevating the status of Africa in Congress. I commend Congressman Payne for spearheading this dialogue and offer my support for the Obama Administration's decision to extend Deferred Enforced Departure for Liberians for 18 months. Today's discussion is an important step to continue raising awareness about the plight of Liberians both here and abroad, and I look forward to learning more about this issue and what assistance we as Members of Congress can provide."“Our immigration system should never cruelly uproot families who have come here from Liberia and are contributing to our economy and culture,” said Rep. Cicilline. “I was delighted to attend today’s conference and will continue working to ensure that Rhode Island’s Liberian-American community has a strong voice in Washington.”

“Liberian-Americans are a vital part of Minnesota’s communities,” said Rep. Ellison. “They pay taxes, send their children to our schools, and own or work at businesses throughout the state. Each year, thousands of Liberian-Americans fear they will be forced to leave their home and their family. The 30,000 Liberian-Americans in Minnesota deserve the security of knowing they will be allowed to remain in the United States. They deserve a path to citizenship.”“Liberians residing in Rhode Island and throughout the country fled to the United States in search of a safe haven from political persecution – the same journey that has drawn millions of people to American shores,” said Rep. Langevin. “The protection from deportation they received has allowed them to become valued members of our communities. They should no longer have to face the uncertainty of waiting for the Attorney General to renew these protections. We can and will work together to make sure that the United States maintains it that they will have a permanent



home in America.”

“The United States has a historical connection to all Liberians, but we also have a moral responsibility to end the killings and mass displacement of innocent citizens,” said Rep. Jackson Lee. “The termination of TPS designation of Liberia would place many Liberians that fled to our country for refuge at risk of being deployed back prematurely. The Liberian people living in our country deserve better treatment and protection than the current Immigration and Nationality Act can afford. Congress needs to permit the extension of section 244 which enables the people to re—register for temporary protection status and work authorization. Let us give the Liberian people the respect and protection they need by supporting H.R. 3123.”

Congresswoman Norton said, “I am delighted and grateful that the President has extended Deferred Enforced Departure status for Liberians in the U.S. before it expired at the end of this month.”

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