



October 11, 2022

The Honorable Alejandro Mayorkas  
Office of the Secretary  
U.S. Department of Homeland Security  
Washington, D.C. 20528

**RE: Replicating Uniting For Ukraine for displaced Venezuelans**

Dear Secretary Mayorkas,

On behalf of the undersigned Venezuelan American organizations, immigration advocacy groups, immigrant service providers, and prominent civil society leaders representing a broad spectrum of constituents and stakeholders across the U.S., we are calling on the President Biden administration to replicate the successes of the Uniting for Ukraine parole program for Venezuelans fleeing persecution: Volunteering for Venezuela.<sup>1</sup>

Facing severe political, economic, and social turmoil, nearly 7 million Venezuelans have fled their home country since 2015, making the Venezuelan exodus the second-largest displacement crisis in the world and the largest in the Western hemisphere.<sup>2</sup> The vast majority of the population is experiencing “limited access to food, basic services, and adequate healthcare, and the deterioration of the rule of law and protection of human rights.”<sup>3</sup>

This fiscal year, more than 150,000 Venezuelans crossed into the U.S. at the southwestern border; some were then subject to further partisan exploitation, bussed to cities, or flown to Martha’s Vineyard.<sup>4</sup> Still, the primary mechanism for displaced individuals to enter the U.S. is typically through the refugee program. Yet, the U.S. resettled just 102 Venezuelan refugees this fiscal year.<sup>5</sup>

Expanding the Uniting For Ukraine model to welcome Venezuelans would provide a safe, orderly, and legal pathway for displaced Venezuelans to live and work in the U.S. for two years. There is no fee to apply, and there is no numerical cap. Beneficiaries enjoy modern, digital processing without visiting an embassy or consulate.

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<sup>1</sup> Matthew La Corte & Gil Guerra. [“Uniting for Ukraine is successful. Let’s expand it to include Venezuelans.”](#) Niskanen Center. August 29, 2022.

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.unhcr.org/en-us/venezuela-emergency.html>

<sup>3</sup> [“Extension of the Designation of Venezuela for Temporary Protected Status”](#). U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS), Department of Homeland Security (DHS). September 8th, 2022.

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/09/14/us/desantis-florida-migrants-marthas-vineyard.html>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.wrapsnet.org/admissions-and-arrivals/>

Volunteering for Venezuela can prevent the dangerous journey of many Venezuelans across the Darien Gap.<sup>6,7</sup> Finally, robust public-private partnerships already exist to support sponsors, many with learned, first-hand experience.

The Uniting model is part of a broader border management strategy to streamline temporary admission for vulnerable migrants by pairing them with U.S. sponsors who have shown an enormous capacity to welcome newcomers in recent years. Through Uniting For Ukraine, more than 130,000 sponsors have registered from all 50 states, providing safe haven to tens of thousands of Ukrainians. We believe Volunteering for Venezuela would see similar interest, especially given the hundreds of thousands of Venezuelan Americans already living in the U.S.

We hope to meet with your office to discuss the crisis in Venezuela and how this program can help save lives.

Thank you for your prompt attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

**Community Organizations and leaders signing this letter:**

|          |           |                                 |  |    |
|----------|-----------|---------------------------------|--|----|
| Maria    | Diaz      | Founder & President             | Venezuelan American Alliance Inc   | FL |
| Oscar    | Chacon    | Executive Director              | Alianza Americas   | IL |
| Maria C. | Vegas     | Deputy State Director           | American Business Immigration Coalition (ABIC)   | FL |
|          |           |                                 | American Business Immigration Coalition/American Business Immigration Coalition Action |    |
| Samuel   | Vilchez   | Florida State Director          |  | FL |
| William  |           |                                 |  |    |
| J.       | Diaz      | Founder                         | Casa de Venezuela Orlando  | FL |
| Isabel   | Vinent    | Co Executive Director           | Florida Immigrant Coalition - FLIC   | FL |
| Hector   | Mujica    | Board Member                    | Hispanics in Philanthropy  | FL |
|          |           | Business owner/Community Leader |  |    |
| Jorge    | Fernandez |                                 | GBS Group  |    |
| Vicente  | Perez     | Legal Coordinator               | Casa de Venezuela (CDV) Orlando  | FL |
|          |           |                                 | Programa de Ayuda Humanitaria para Venezuela, Inc.                                     |    |
| Marisol  | Dieguez   | Founder/President               |  | FL |
| Matthew  | Burwick   | Activist                        | Comunidad Venezolana   | DC |
| Emilio   | Buitrago  | Board Member                    | Casa de Venezuela Greater Philadelphia   | PA |
| Adelys   | Ferro     | Executive Director              | Venezuelan American Caucus   | FL |

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.unhcr.org/en-us/news/press/2022/3/6243298f4/number-venezuelans-crossing-darien-gap-soars.html>

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/10/07/world/americas/venezuelan-migrants-us-border.html>

|           |                        |                         |   |          |
|-----------|------------------------|-------------------------|---|----------|
| Maria A.  | Marquez                | Community Leader        | As self   | FL       |
| Adriana   | Acosta                 | Co-Founder              | CESI Center   | NY       |
| Hector    | Arguinzones            | Director                | Venezuelans and Immigrants Aid, Inc.  | NY       |
| Erick     | Rozo                   | Co-Founder              | CESI center   | NY       |
| Euclides  | Morles                 | Community Leader        | Casa Venezuela Columbus _Ohio   | OH       |
| Norely    | Lopez                  | Community Activist      | ONG Blanca Nieve Sierra   | UT       |
| Nerlitt   | Torres                 | President               | Ong Blanca Nieve Sierra   | FL       |
| Leon      | Granado                | President               | Venezuela USA Foundation, Inc.  | FL       |
| Sonia     | Cosme                  | Directora               | Asociación de venezolanos en Puerto Rico.   | PR       |
| Alberto   | Feo                    | Community Activist      | Casa Orlando  | CA       |
| Raquel    | Leal                   | Founder                 | Latinas Time  | TN       |
| Belkys    | Polanco                | President               | Casa de Venezuela Jacksonville  | FL       |
| Ana       | Gil Garcia             | Director                | Illinois Venezuelan Alliance  | IL       |
| Vladimiro | Mujica                 | Director                | VenAmerica  | AZ       |
| Denise    | Rincon                 | President               | Venezuelan Association of Massachusetts<br>CASA VENEZOLANA AMERICANA EMERALD<br>COAST | MA<br>FL |
| Brenda    | Stephens               | President               | Vision Diaspora Foundation  | DC       |
| Carla     | Bustillos              | Director                | Casa Venezuela Dallas   | TX       |
| Johana    | Linares                | Vice-President          | Unidad Houston  | TX       |
| Jorge     | Marquez                | Community Leader        | Caleidoscopio Humano  | DC       |
| Gabriela  | Blondell               | Director                | VENAMERICA  | FL       |
| Paciano   | Padron                 | President               | Venezolanos en Wisconsin  | WI       |
| Ivan      | Diaz                   | Administrator           | Pulso   | FL       |
| Liz       | Alarcon                | Founder & Exec.Director | Panamerican and caribbean Union for Human<br>Rights                                   | FL       |
| Jose      | Oropeza                | General Secretary       | Juventud Venezolana en el Exterior(JUVENEX)   | FL       |
| Edgar     | Amado                  | Coordinador General     | Venezuelan Association of Massachusetts   | MA       |
| Eva       | Santos-<br>Monasterios | Community Activist      | Philanthrartist   | TX       |
| Libia     | Gregg                  | Director                |   | TX       |
| Mary      | Salazar                | Community Activist      |   | TX       |
| Diego     | Maldonado<br>Santos    | Community Activist      | Diegolandia   | MA       |
| Luis      | Maldonado-             | Community Activist      |   | MA       |

Moreno

|          |                  |                              |                               |    |
|----------|------------------|------------------------------|-------------------------------|----|
| Lorena   | Camacho          | Vicepresident                | Venezolanos en Sanford        | FL |
| Patricia | Parada           | Directora de servicio social | Venezuela Para Ti             | NC |
| Jesler   | Molina           | Director                     | Alianza Venezolana Utah       | UT |
| Maryori  | Duarte-Sheffield | Secretary                    | VENEZOLANOS UNIDOS EN INDIANA | IN |