



Faced With Criticism, Trump Administration Reverses Abrupt End to Humanitarian Relief



Maria Isabel Bueso, 24, sits with her mother Karla Bueso last week at their home in Concord, Ca. The Bueso family had been ordered to leave the country despite the treatment that Isabel is receiving for her illnesses. Jim Wilson/The New York Times

By Miriam Jordan

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LOS ANGELES — The Trump administration on Monday announced that it would reconsider its decision to force immigrants facing life-threatening health crises to return to their home countries, an abrupt move last month that generated public outrage and was roundly condemned by the medical establishment.

On Aug. 7, the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services, without public notice, eliminated a “deferred action” program that had allowed immigrants to avoid deportation while they or their relatives were undergoing lifesaving medical treatment.

The agency, part of the Department of Homeland Security, had sent letters informing those who had asked for a renewal, which the immigrants must make every two years, that it was no longer entertaining such requests. The letters said that the immigrants must leave the country within 33 days, or face deportation.

On Monday, the agency said in a statement that while limiting the program was “appropriate,” officials would “complete the caseload that was pending on August 7.”

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The statement said that deportation proceedings had not been initiated against anyone who had received the letter. However, it did not say whether it would continue to grant immigrants extensions to stay in the country or whether the program would be continued after current applications are processed.

When asked for clarification, an agency official said the agency “is taking immediate corrective action to reopen previously pending cases for consideration.”

“Whether a very limited version of deferred action will continue forward at U.S.C.I.S. is still under review. More information will be forthcoming,” said the official, who only agreed to speak on background.

Among those who had been impacted by the administration’s decision to end the program was Maria Isabel Bueso, 24, who has participated in several medical studies, including a drug trial that resulted in a treatment for her rare disease, which causes dwarfism and other physical deformities.

[Read the story of one immigrant who could have faced deportation, and lost lifesaving treatment, under the new policy.]

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Without the drug, Ms. Bueso and others with the genetic disorder were unlikely to live to adulthood. Her doctor, Paul Harmatz, had said that leaving the United States would lead her to quickly fall ill and die.

On hearing that she had a chance to stay in California, rather than return to Guatemala, where the drug is not available and she cannot receive the required medical care, Ms. Bueso said, “This is amazing. This is great news to wake up to.”

After The Times featured Ms. Bueso [in an article](#) last week, she was invited to testify before Congress in the coming days. Indignation at the policy spread on social media, and several Democratic lawmakers, including Representative Nancy Pelosi, the speaker of the House, called on the Trump administration to reverse the decision.

Ms. Bueso’s lawyer, Martin Lawler, said, “It’s unclear whether people will be granted appropriate extensions or whether people like Isabel will always be living on the knife’s edge, worried that the next extension will not be granted when they are in the middle of receiving medical treatment for their serious diseases.”

A longtime advocate for people with rare diseases, Ms. Bueso said that she planned to lobby Congress to find long-term relief for patients. “We have to find a permanent solution so that families like mine don’t have to go through this again,” she said.

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