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Restarting the Central American Minors Program

MEDIA NOTE

OFFICE OF THE SPOKESPERSON

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As another concrete step in implementing our comprehensive regional migration management strategy, we are expanding legal pathways to enter the United States by reopening the Central American Minors (CAM) program. As directed by President Biden, the Departments of State and Homeland Security (DHS) have initiated the first phase of reinstating and improving the CAM program to reunite qualified children from El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras with their parent or parents who are lawfully present in the United States. This program provides a safe, legal, and orderly alternative to the risks incurred in the attempt to migrate to the United States irregularly. The U.S. southern border remains closed to irregular migration, and we reiterate our warning that people not attempt that dangerous journey.

The State Department's Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration (PRM) is working closely with DHS's U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) to reopen the program in two phases: the first will process eligible applications that were closed when the program was

terminated in 2017, and the second will begin to accept new applications with updated guidance to follow.

PRM and USCIS have already identified all suspended cases eligible for reopening and will coordinate with domestic resettlement agencies to contact eligible parents in order to verify that they are still lawfully present in the United States and wish to reopen their child's case. Once this verification has taken place, PRM will instruct its Resettlement Support Center based in El Salvador to contact the children and family members in El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras to begin case processing. We anticipate that the first contacts with parents will begin as soon as the week of March 15.

PRM and USCIS are also developing plans to expand the program and accept new applications. We will provide those details as soon as they are ready.

Together with other efforts across the U.S. Government, reopening the CAM program is an important step toward expanding lawful pathways for humanitarian protection and opportunity in the United States. During the life of the program, we have reunified nearly 5,000 children safely and securely with their families. The program reflects our values as a nation and represents our continued commitment to ensure that our immigration system treats people with dignity and respect and protects the most vulnerable, especially children.

For media inquiries about the CAM restart, please email PRMPress@state.gov and mediainquiry@hq.dhs.gov.

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