

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

March 2, 2021

The Honorable Joe Biden
President of the United States
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Ave NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Biden:

Congratulations on your inauguration as the 46th President of the United States. As you begin to implement your pledge to “elevate diplomacy as the United States’ principal tool of foreign policy,” we respectfully urge you to promptly reverse the Trump Administration’s cruel policies against the Cuban people and renew mutually productive dialogue with the Cuban government. Executive Orders implemented by the Trump Administration tightened sanctions to levels not seen in decades, at a time when Cubans are facing acute shortages of food and medicine exacerbated by their preventive economic shutdown which has helped to limit the spread of the SARS-CoV-2 virus.¹ With the stroke of a pen, you can assist struggling Cuban families and promote a more constructive approach by promptly returning to the Obama–Biden Administration policy of engagement and normalization of relations.

Among the policies that should be immediately reversed are restrictions on both remittances sent by Cuban-Americans to their families in Cuba as well as donative remittances. The U.S. does not restrict remittances to most of the countries targeted by U.S. sanctions, and after nearly 6 decades of U.S. sanctions, 40 percent of Cuban-Americans send remittances to their families in Cuba and well over half of Cuban citizens depend on them.² In 2019, the Trump Administration placed a cap on family remittances — which were not capped under the Obama–Biden policy — to just \$1,000 per quarter, while prohibiting donative remittances altogether. In 2020, the Trump Administration imposed further restrictions by prohibiting international companies from transferring remittances through the primary entities in Cuba that process them. This led Western Union — the leading company used for transmitting remittances to Cuba — to announce an end to its operations in November 2020.

We also urge you to roll back the Trump Administration’s restrictions on travel to Cuba. The Trump Administration ended people-to-people travel, prohibited private and corporate air and sea

¹ Michael Weissenstein and Andrea Rodriguez, “Cuba Launches Widespread Rationing in Face of Crisis,” AP NEWS (Associated Press, May 10, 2019), <https://apnews.com/article/42b62f24be9b4e0d9f764f1a3fa9647a>.

² Katrin Hansing and Bert Hoffmann, “Cuba’s New Social Structure: Assessing the Re-Stratification of Cuban Society 60 Years after Revolution,” GIGA (German Institute for Global and Area Studies, February 2019), <https://www.giga-hamburg.de/en/publications/11568293-cuba-social-structure-assessing-stratification-cuban-society-60-years-after-revolution>.

travel to Cuba, resulting in cancellation of nearly 800,000 U.S. cruise reservations,³ and ended commercial flights to cities other than Havana. The Administration also prohibited U.S. citizens and residents from patronizing numerous hotels and restaurants including the most historic. These restrictions not only harm Cuba's economy — including the more than half a million ordinary Cubans who are employed in the tourism sector — but also deprive Cubans and U.S. nationals of important educational and cultural exchange that can help both sides share their values and strengthen the potential for a better long term relationship between our peoples.

These detrimental Trump Administration policies, and dozens of other directives concerning Cuba, were made by Executive Orders modifying the Cuban Assets Control Regulations. By signing a single order, you have the power to revert these regulations back to their status on the final day of the Obama–Biden Administration. We respectfully urge you to do so without delay.

We also urge you to reverse the recent politicized decision by the departing Trump Administration to add Cuba back to the list of State Sponsors of Terrorism. This designation will further damage Cuba's economy and place another roadblock in your path towards improved relations. Cuba was removed from the list in 2015 after an exhaustive review by experts at the State Department and in the Intelligence Community, and the Trump Administration did not cite any new facts to justify their decision.

In addition to these immediate steps, we also support a more comprehensive effort to deepen engagement and normalization. This includes restarting diplomatic engagement directly with the Cuban government, both at senior levels as well as through the re-staffing of each country's respective embassies. Engagement on key areas of mutual interest that were pursued by the Obama–Biden Administration should be resumed, including bilateral groups on migration, disaster response, environment, and law enforcement issues such as counter-narcotics and money laundering.

Engagement on medical cooperation should be a particular priority, especially as the fight to combat COVID-19 rages on. As demonstrated by the joint efforts of the U.S. and Cuba to respond to the Ebola outbreak in Africa,⁴ these efforts can provide real benefits to people around the world.⁵ The U.S. should end the policy of pressuring other countries to reject health care cooperation with Cuba, particularly in the middle of a pandemic, as Cuba's foreign medical missions often provide assistance in countries and regions that often face inadequate healthcare services.

These initial steps should be part of an ongoing process that seeks an ultimate end to the harmful and extra-territorial “embargo” (also called an “economic blockade”) against Cuba. Ending the

³ Adam Leposa, “Cuba Cancelled: How the Cruise Lines Are Reacting,” Travel Agent Central (Travel Agent Central, June 5, 2019), <https://www.travelagentcentral.com/cruises/carnival-corp-cancels-cuba-cruises-other-lines-analyzing-details>.

⁴ Erin Brodwin, “The Global Health Threat That Brought The US And Cuba Back Together,” Business Insider (Business Insider, December 18, 2014), <https://www.businessinsider.com/ebola-brought-us-and-cuba-together-2014-12>.


⁵ Erin Schumaker, “We'll Remember Cuba's Ebola Compassion Long After Castro's Death,” HuffPost (HuffPost, December 2, 2016), https://www.huffpost.com/entry/cuba-medical-personnel-ebola-castro_n_58405570e4b0c68e047f5a87.


embargo is supported by a majority of people in the United States,⁶ and it negatively impacts U.S. global leadership, as evidenced by the 28 years of consecutive votes condemning it by nearly all members of the U.N. General Assembly, including our allies. U.S. businesses should be allowed to sell and provide services to Cuba, and to import from Cuba, an initiative started under the Obama–Biden administration.

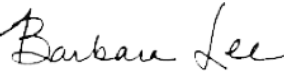
According to a 2015 Washington Post poll conducted in Cuba, 97 percent of Cubans believe better relations with the United States are “good for Cuba,” and Reuters reported that ordinary Cubans in Havana celebrated the potential for your win to translate to a reversal of the draconian Trump policies that have harmed ordinary Cubans.⁷ For the sake of both the Cuban and American peoples, we hope you will return our policy towards Cuba to a constructive direction, and we look forward to working with you to create a new chapter in U.S.-Cuba relations.


Thank you kindly for your attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,


Bobby L. Rush
Member of Congress


Steve Cohen
Member of Congress


Barbara Lee
Member of Congress


Gwen Moore
Member of Congress

/s/
Jake Auchincloss
Member of Congress

/s/
Karen Bass
Member of Congress

/s/
Donald S. Beyer Jr.
Member of Congress

/s/
Earl Blumenauer
Member of Congress

⁶ “New Poll: 6 in 10 Republicans Support Policies of Cuba Engagement,” Engage Cuba (Engage Cuba, June 12, 2017), <https://www.engagecuba.org/press-releases/2017/6/12/new-poll-6-in-10-republicans-support-policies-of-cuba-engagement>.

⁷ Nelson Acosta, “Cubans Applaud Biden Win, Hope for Easing of Sanctions,” Reuters (Thomson Reuters, November 7, 2020), <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-election-cuba/cubans-applaud-biden-win-hope-for-easing-of-sanctions-idUSKBN27N0Z5>.

/s/

Anthony G. Brown
Member of Congress

/s/

Cori Bush
Member of Congress

/s/

André Carson
Member of Congress

/s/

Joaquin Castro
Member of Congress

/s/

David N. Cicilline
Member of Congress

/s/

Yvette D. Clarke
Member of Congress

/s/

Emanuel Cleaver, II
Member of Congress

/s/

Jim Cooper
Member of Congress

/s/

Jim Costa
Member of Congress

/s/

Angie Craig
Member of Congress

/s/

Danny K. Davis
Member of Congress

/s/

Peter A. DeFazio
Member of Congress

/s/

Rosa L. DeLauro
Member of Congress

/s/

Debbie Dingell
Member of Congress

/s/

Mike Doyle
Member of Congress

/s/

Anna G. Eshoo
Member of Congress

/s/

Dwight Evans
Member of Congress

/s/

John Garamendi
Member of Congress

/s/

Jesús G. "Chuy" García
Member of Congress

/s/

Al Green
Member of Congress

/s/

Raúl M. Grijalva
Member of Congress

/s/

Brian Higgins
Member of Congress

/s/

Jared Huffman
Member of Congress

/s/

Pramila Jayapal
Member of Congress

/s/

Eddie Bernice Johnson
Member of Congress

/s/

Henry C. "Hank" Johnson, Jr.
Member of Congress

/s/

Marcy Kaptur
Member of Congress

/s/

Robin L. Kelly
Member of Congress

/s/

Ro Khanna
Member of Congress

/s/

Daniel T. Kildee
Member of Congress

/s/

Ann Kirkpatrick
Member of Congress

/s/

Rick Larsen
Member of Congress

/s/

Brenda L. Lawrence
Member of Congress

/s/

Sheila Jackson Lee
Member of Congress

/s/

Andy Levin
Member of Congress

/s/

Ted Lieu
Member of Congress

/s/

Alan Lowenthal
Member of Congress

/s/

Carolyn B. Maloney
Member of Congress

/s/

Betty McCollum
Member of Congress

/s/

James P. McGovern
Member of Congress

/s/

Jerry McNerney
Member of Congress

/s/

Gregory W. Meeks
Member of Congress

/s/

Joseph D. Morelle
Member of Congress

/s/

Jerrold Nadler
Member of Congress

/s/

Grace F. Napolitano
Member of Congress

/s/

Marie Newman
Member of Congress

/s/

Eleanor Holmes Norton
Member of Congress

/s/

Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez
Member of Congress

/s/

Ilhan Omar
Member of Congress

/s/

Donald M. Payne, Jr.
Member of Congress

/s/

Ed Perlmutter
Member of Congress

/s/

Dean Phillips
Member of Congress

/s/

Chellie Pingree
Member of Congress

/s/

Mark Pocan
Member of Congress

/s/

Katie Porter
Member of Congress

/s/

Ayanna Pressley
Member of Congress

/s/

David E. Price
Member of Congress

/s/

Jamie Raskin
Member of Congress

/s/

Jan Schakowsky
Member of Congress

/s/

Adam Smith
Member of Congress

/s/

Mark Takano
Member of Congress

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Bennie Thompson
Member of Congress

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Rashida Tlaib
Member of Congress

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Paul D. Tonko
Member of Congress

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David Trone
Member of Congress

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Juan Vargas
Member of Congress

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Nydia M. Velázquez
Member of Congress

/s/

Maxine Waters
Member of Congress

/s/

Peter Welch
Member of Congress

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Nikema Williams
Member of Congress

/s/

John Yarmuth
Member of Congress