

February 10, 2021

President Joseph Biden
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Biden,

As members of a broad range of organizations, including faith, Cuban-American, human rights, foreign policy, business, environmental, academic, grassroots, and other groups, we are writing to recommend immediate measures your administration should take to fulfill your campaign pledge “to reverse the failed Trump policies that inflicted harm on Cubans and their families.”

We believe strongly that it is in the interest of the United States, and in the interest of the Cuban people, to move forward with normalization of U.S.-Cuban relations. The almost sixty-year-old embargo is a relic of the past that should be replaced by a more constructive policy of engagement that allows us to address both our common interests and our differences. The process of normalization will benefit the United States, as we expand cooperation on issues of mutual interest including climate change, addressing the COVID-19 pandemic, security, people-to-people relationships, and increased travel, trade, and commerce. It will benefit the Cuban people who are facing difficult economic and humanitarian circumstances and respond to concerns about their well-being among the Cuban-American community here in the United States. And it will enable Cuba to engage more readily in its own internal processes of reform and political debate.

We call in this letter for immediate actions, but these are intended only as the first steps toward full normalization of relations. We firmly believe that your administration should advance beyond these initial actions to create a constructive relationship, leading to an end to the embargo, with our island neighbor.

As an immediate starting point, we urge you to take executive action that returns the regulations governing trade and travel to Cuba to where they stood on January 20th, 2017. The Trump administration took a series of steps over the last four years that restricted remittances sent by Cuban Americans and other U.S. persons to families in Cuba, limited family travel and restricted people-to-people travel for all U.S. citizens, limited agricultural exports to Cuba, and weakened the opportunities for trade and investment that benefit the Cuban people, especially in the growing Cuban private sector. You can and should simply reverse these measures. Two other ill-considered and damaging actions – the decision to permit private lawsuits against third country investors in Cuba under Title III of the Cuban Liberty and Democratic Solidarity Act of 1996 (LIBERTAD Act), and the decision to reinstate Cuba on the list of “State Sponsors of Terrorism” —were implemented by executive action and should be reversed as well. We believe that the Trump administration’s executive actions can be eliminated with one comprehensive executive order.

We also urge you to rebuild the U.S. diplomatic presence in Cuba, fully staffing our embassy, especially our consular staffing. While we need to be conscious about potential health concerns and the safety of our diplomats, it is clearly in our interest to fully staff our embassy. We need to resume all consular services that would permit Cuban citizens to re-engage through travel with their families in the United States, and with U.S. society more broadly; and that can expand the cultural, artistic, athletic, religious, environmental, educational, and scientific exchanges between our societies. It is also in our interest to staff the political side of our embassy, in order to directly engage with Cuban officials and civil society about the many issues we need to address together. Fully staffing our embassy will facilitate bilateral dialogues on issues of mutual interest. In line with this, we urge you to allow parallel increases in the staffing of the Cuban embassy here in the United States.

We also call on you to re-launch the U.S.-Cuban working groups that were meeting to discuss a range of issues –from environmental cooperation in the Florida Straits and other climate related issues such as renewable energy and climate-resilient agriculture, to law enforcement dialogue, to cooperation on migration and human trafficking, to the more contentious issues of property claims and human rights. These working groups brought concrete progress on several important issues and opened dialogue on others. They build bridges between technical experts and government officials in both countries and serve areas where our two countries have mutual interests.

As organizations that believe the long-standing U.S. embargo on Cuba is unjustified and counter-productive, we hope you will take these initial steps, move further to ease the restrictions that are within your power, and then urge the Congress to build on these measures in ways that move quickly towards the full ending of the U.S. embargo.

We are prepared to support you in these initial steps, and to work to educate our members of Congress and our communities about the need to support engagement with Cuba and bring an end to the embargo.

Yours,

Alliance of Baptists
Alliance for Cuba Engagement and Respect (ACERE)
Americas Media Initiative
Cancio Consulting Group
Caribbean Agroecology Institute
Center for Cuban Studies
Center for Democracy in the Americas
Center for International Policy
Chicago Religious Leadership Network on Latin America
Church World Service

Claudia Jones School for Political Education
CODEPINK
Collaborative for Educational Services
Cuba Educational Travel
Cuba-U.S. Agroecology Network
Cuban Americans for Engagement (CAFE)
CubaOne Foundation
Disciples Center for Public Witness
Engage Cuba
Espíritu Travel
Foundation for a Civil Society
Foundation for the Normalization of Relations with Cuba (FORNORM)
Franklin County Continuing the Political Revolution - Peace Task Force
Freedom Archives
Friends of Latin America
Fund for Reconciliation and Development
Global Health Partners
Global Ministries of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and the United Church of Christ
Haiti Oye
Incredible Adventures
Latin America Working Group (LAWG)
Mainers for Accountable Leadership
Mennonite Central Committee U.S. Washington Office
Missionary Oblates
National Council of Churches
National Foreign Trade Council
National Tour Association
Ocean Doctor
Oxfam America
Pax Christi USA
PazAmor
Platform for Innovation and Dialogue with Cuba
Presbyterian Church USA
Private Citizen
Red Sugarcane Press
Seattle Cuba Friendship Committee
Task Force on the Americas
The Sean Kimerling Testicular Cancer Foundation, Inc.
The United Methodist Church - General Board of Church and Society
United States Tour Operators Association
University of Massachusetts, Amherst - Cuban Studies Research Working Group

University of Massachusetts Environmental Conservation
Unrestricted Nutrition Counseling and Consulting
USA Rice
Washington Office on Latin America (WOLA)
Women Against Military Madness