

President Barack Obama
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington, DC 20500

November 5th, 2013

Dear Mr. President,

We wanted to express our continued gratitude and support for the significant changes that you and your administration have made pertaining to U.S. policy towards Cuba, specifically, the executive directive in 2011 that lifted restrictions on academic and religious travel to Cuba, in addition to the reinstatement of the people-to-people educational travel category. As a coalition of humanitarian, academic, religious, business, and cultural interests we can say that this directive opened up a realm of new possibilities for meaningful exchange with Cuban civil society. We also applaud your strong stance behind this policy as it came under attack in H.R. 2434, the Financial Services and General Government Appropriations Act of 2012.

Since this executive order there have been a variety of changes made in the Cuban economy that allow for the development of small, private enterprises and the purchase and sale of homes and automobiles. The Cuban government has also made significant changes to their migration policy which eliminated the cumbersome "exit-visa" application process and granted the opportunity of return for Cubans who previously left the country illegally. These efforts to re-establish ties with the diaspora community and provide new opportunities for Cuban society are positive steps. Now is the time for the U.S. to take new steps towards an improved, more cooperative, relationship between our nation and Cuba, ones that will be conducive to more progress toward full political freedom and economic opportunity for the Cuban people.

For these reasons, Mr. President, we urge you to undertake the following action this year:

Open up direct high-level dialogue with the Cuban government. We encourage high level direct, unrestricted, and meaningful dialogue with President Raúl Castro or his designee, to discuss issues that concern both the United States and Cuba. We laud the recent government-to-government talks about resuming direct mail service and migration talks between our two countries. We support extending such talks to include other topics of mutual concern, creating the potential for recognizing and supporting new openings in Cuba that will benefit the Cuban people. These high-level talks could help facilitate even greater dialogue and exchange of ideas between our communities and create possibilities for private sector engagement.

Use your executive authority to remove Cuba from the United States' list of state sponsors of terrorism. Cuba is not a state sponsor of terrorism and must be taken off the list. This designation is widely recognized as inaccurate. Cuba's placement on the list dates to decades-old political dynamics

that no longer exist. The most recent reports suggest that the Cuban government provided no weapons or paramilitary training to terrorist groups, that Cuba joined a regional group on anti-money laundering and combating the financing of terrorism, and that Cuba has distanced itself from Basque Fatherland and Liberty (ETA) members living on the island. Cuba is sponsoring and hosting the Colombian-FARC guerrillas' peace talks, collaborates with the United States in counter-drug efforts, and has made international commitments to combat terrorism. Furthermore, Cuba's inclusion on the list of state sponsors of terrorism undermines opportunities for the United States to use its influence to encourage continuing improvements in political freedom and human rights.

Retaining Cuba on the state sponsors of terrorism list compromises U.S. interests and credibility in the Western Hemisphere. Removing Cuba from the list would send a positive signal to all Latin American governments, which have consistently called on the United States to end the embargo.

Exercise your executive authority lift all restrictions on licensed travel between the United States and Cuba. Purposeful travel between the United States and Cuba creates mutual understanding and strengthens a variety of ties among our peoples. Since your 2011 executive directive easing restrictions on educational, religious, and cultural travel, our communities can provide firsthand witness to the degree to which such relationship-building serves the common good of both peoples, and strengthens our commonalities. We see no adverse consequences from this period of expanded relationship, and strongly urge that the same opportunity be available to all residents of the United States by creating a general licenses for all categories of travel.

Our organizations support the full normalization of relations between the United States and Cuba, and believe these three incremental steps will serve that end, while improving the lives of Cubans in the interim. We urge you to seize this moment of opportunity to improve relations between the United States and Cuba.

Sincerely,

Alliance for a Responsible Cuba Policy
Tampa, FL

Alliance of Baptists

American Society of Travel Agents

**Baltimore-Matanzas Association:
Maryland-Cuba Friendship Coalition**
Baltimore, MD

Caribbean American Children Foundation
Palm Coast, FL

Center for Cuban Studies
New York, NY

Center for Democracy in the Americas

Center for International Policy

**Chicago Religious Leadership Network on
Latin America**
Chicago, IL

Church World Service

Cuba Cultural Exchange
Philadelphia, PA

Cuba Educational Travel

Cuba Partners Committee: The New York Avenue Presbyterian Church
Washington, DC

Cuba Travel Services, Inc.

Cuban American Alliance

Cuban American Defense League
Coral Gables, FL

Cuban Americans for Engagement

Cubapuentes, Inc.
Miami, FL

Disarm/Global Health Partners
New York, NY

Eco Cuba Network
Berkley, CA

ENCASA/US-Cuba

Foundation for Normalization of US/Cuba Relations (FORNORM)
Miami, Florida

Friends Committee on National Legislation

Fund for Reconciliation and Development
Dobbs Ferry, NY

Gallatin County (MT) Democrats: Veterans for Peace
Bozeman, MT

Gallatin Valley Friends of Cuba
Bozeman, MT

Global Exchange
San Francisco, CA

Hope for Cuba Foundation
New Hope, PA

Howard County Friends of Latin America
Columbia, MD

J Perez Associates, Inc

Jewish Solidarity
Miami, FL

Latin America Working Group

Latin American and the Caribbean Office: Global Ministries of the United Church of Christ and the Disciples of Christ

Legacy of Equality, Leadership and Organizing
Seattle, WA

Marazul Charters

Minnesota Cuba Committee
Minneapolis, MN

Molimar Export Consultants, Inc
Philadelphia, PA

National Tour Association

Natural Environmental Ecological Management (NEEM)
Durham, NC

Philadelphia-Cardenas Friendship Association
Philadelphia, PA

Presbyterian Church USA

Presbyterian Church USA Cuba Partners Network

Presbyterian Peace Fellowship
Stony Point, NY

Progreso Weekly
Miami, FL

**Santa Fe/Holguin (Cuba) Sister City
Association**

Santa Fe, NM

Social Science Research Council

Brooklyn, NY

Transeair Travel LLC

**United Church of Christ, Justice and
Witness Ministries**

**United Methodist Church, General Board
of Church and Society**

**United Nations Association of Greater
Philadelphia**

Philadelphia, PA

United States Tour Operator Association

US Women and Cuba Collaboration

Washington Office on Latin America

Witness for Peace

**Women's International League for Peace
and Freedom**