

President Joseph R. Biden

The White House

1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW Washington, DC 20500

June 29, 2022

Dear President Biden:

As representatives of faith-based denominations and organizations, many of whom have a long history of relationships with Cuban faith partners, we are writing to thank you and your administration for taking measures to lift some of the harmful restrictions imposed on Cuba and the Cuban people. We appreciate that you have recognized the unprecedented humanitarian situation on the island. We hope these initial positive steps will help increase support for the Cuban people and allow Cuban Americans to assist their families on the island.

At the same time, we are still deeply concerned about the situation on the island. Our partners in the Cuban churches—congregants, ministers, and their communities—continue to experience severe shortages of essential medicines, food, and other vital materials amidst the COVID-19 pandemic. And as you know, the current crisis is causing tens of thousands of Cubans to leave and seek better conditions in the United States. We appreciate State Department officials who expressed their willingness to help churches and denominations get humanitarian relief to Cuban faith-based partners on a case-by-case basis. But this willingness has not solved the problems we face. And the initial measures taken by your administration, while critical first steps, are not enough.

We are aware of the political situation in Cuba, and many of our faith organizations have made clear statements supporting the Cuban people's right to protest peacefully. We hope the Cuban government will respond to protests with dialogue and action. As in other countries, we condemn heavy-handed responses to protests by security forces. We urge the government to release all those detained for peacefully protesting or reporting on the protests. But this political unrest is not a reason to further punish the Cuban people with an overly restrictive implementation of U.S. economic and trade policies.

We know that numerous factors have caused Cuba's economic crisis. However, the U.S. embargo and the changes adopted by the previous administration have contributed to the worsening humanitarian situation the island is facing. We were encouraged by your administration's initial steps, but we believe you must do more. The U.S. government must take the following steps to remove all obstacles preventing families and faith-based communities in the U.S. from helping families and faith partners in Cuba.

- Reinstatement of all forms of people-to-people travel, both group and individual.
- Ensure that the U.S. Embassy in Havana can provide full consular services so that responsibilities are no longer exported to its embassy in Guyana.
- Revise and remove restrictions on U.S. banks so they can establish corresponding accounts with Cuban banks not managed by the military. Reverse the prohibition on U-turn transactions, and allow Western Union wire services to resume. These steps would ease access to remittances and maximize their impact, especially for Cuban entrepreneurs.
- Resume bilateral conversations around the Memorandums of Understanding signed under the Obama administration, including the high-priority issues of counter-narcotics and law enforcement cooperation, environmental protection, food security, and public health.

- Remove Cuba from the State Sponsor of Terrorism List, which continues to complicate all significant aspects of engagement with the island, including delivery of humanitarian assistance.

U.S. and Cuban churches have worked together for many years toward common goals. As religious freedom in Cuba has improved, our relationships have grown more robust, and church membership has grown. We join our Cuban counterparts in urging your administration to take these additional steps to benefit the people, churches, and civil society in Cuba.

Sincerely,

Alliance of Baptists

American Friends Service Committee

Christian Reformed Church Office of Social Justice

Church of the Brethren, Office of Peacebuilding and Policy

Church World Service

Congregation of Our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd, U.S. Provinces

Cuba Partners Network of the Presbyterian Church (USA)

The Episcopal Church

Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

Florida Council of Churches

Friends Committee on National Legislation

Friends United Meeting

Global Ministries of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and the United Church of Christ

Latin America Working Group

Mennonite Central Committee U.S.

National Advocacy Center of the Sister of the Good Shepherd

The National Council of Churches of Christ in the USA

New England Yearly Meeting of Friends (Quakers)

Presbyterian Church (USA)

United Church of Christ, Justice and Local Church Ministries

The United Methodist Church – General Board of Church and Society

Washington Office on Latin America