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July 26, 2021

President Joseph R. Biden, Jr.
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Ave NW
Washington, DC 20500

RE: Freedom for the People of Cuba

Dear Mr. President:

On behalf of the citizens of the Tampa area, many of whom share a proud Cuban heritage, thank you for your strong first set of sanctions targeting the head of the Cuban military and others in the Cuban regime. In addition, I appreciate your condemnation of mass detentions in Cuba and sham trials of individuals who had the courage to speak out against the worsening oppression of the communist regime and for following through on your call for democracies around the world to join you in standing with the Cuban people.

The Tampa community has been central and supportive of human rights and Cuban independence since the days when freedom fighter Jose Marti rallied cigar workers in Tampa for support for Cuban independence over one hundred years ago. It is no different now. My neighbors are lending their voices and rallying in the streets in support of their families and friends who are in living in desperation on the island. My valued staff members also have family and friends in Cuba. It is impossible now for them to communicate with their loved ones in Cuba. Before the Cuban regime cut off the internet we heard directly that most Cubans do not have electricity, medicine, food, internet or access to a hospital. They feel completely betrayed by the Cuban regime and are demanding freedom and a better life. We must do all we can to increase access to internet and communication on the island.

As you consider the next steps to support the people of Cuba, the goal must be a peaceful transfer of power – one in which everyday Cubans have a right to choose their own government. The communist regime in power now is not legitimate and has completely failed the people of Cuba. The government must change to give voice and rights to the people of Cuba. To that end, further sanctions should be imposed against additional members the communist regime as we rally other nations to press for democracy and human rights in Cuba. Over the years, I have worked with and witnessed how churches, religious and civil society organizations have played a constructive role for change, and I know they are ready to do so now. I look forward to a day when travel and trade restrictions that harm the Cuban people come to an end as well.

In a resolution passed recently by Tampa City Council, authored by Cuban American Luis Viera, in support of peaceful protestors, the Council noted Tampa's unique history regarding independence for Cuba and the "[g]enerations of Cubans [who] have made the journey, as immigrants and refugees, from Cuba to Tampa for a better life. ...The contributions of Cuban refugees to Tampa are immense, including civic, economic, entrepreneurial and cultural contributions; and ... th[e] Tampa connection to Cuba continues with many Cuban-Americans in Tampa having active family connections to Cuba through remittances, correspondence to and travel to Cuba to visit and support family. The ties that bind Tampa and Cuba are many and are formed out of history and family; and ... many citizens of Tampa [are] ...in strong support of the right of Cubans to be free; and ... values our best aspirational American values of liberty, tolerance and freedom. These are the ideas and values that Cubans march for today; ... the people of Tampa stand with the people of Cuba in support of their quest for democracy, liberty and freedom."

Thank you, Mr. President for your clarion call of support of the Cuban people and their families and friends in the U.S., and the direct sanctions on the communist regime members responsible for the ongoing repression and response to the peaceful protests. On behalf of the Tampa community, we stand ready to support further actions by the Administration and offer our encouragement and gratitude.

If you have any questions or comments, please do not hesitate to contact my Chief of Staff, Lara Hopkins, or District Director Marcia Mejia, at 813-871-2817 or 202-225-3376.

Sincerely,



Kathy Castor
U.S. Representative
Florida – District 14