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February 3, 2009

Tom Winkowski, Assistant Commissioner  
United States Customs & Border Protection  
Office of Field Operations  
1400 Pennsylvania Avenue  
Washington, DC 20229

Dear Mr. Winkowski:

I am writing to request that you utilize the authority granted to you as Assistant Commissioner to give consideration to adding Tampa International Airport to the current list of cities designated under Title 19 CFR, Chapter 1, Part 122, Section 122.153 as authorized ports of entry/exit for U.S.-Cuba air charter flights. As you know, the current airports with the ability to fly to Cuba under this provision include Miami, New York and Los Angeles. Louis E. Miller, the Executive Director of the Tampa International Airport, is in full support of this request that could provide an added access point to the thousands of Cuban-American families that live in and around my Tampa Bay district.

According to the U.S. Census data, the Tampa-St. Petersburg-Clearwater SMSA has the 5<sup>th</sup> largest population of Cuban-Americans (66,963) of the SMSA's within the United States; and, if you include Orlando-Kissimmee (25,417), Lakeland (7,146), Jacksonville (7,541) and Sarasota-Bradenton (3,797), which totals over 110,000 people, with 71% of these Cuban-Americans living less than an hour's drive to the Airport.

I have called on President Obama to fulfill his campaign promise and lift travel restrictions on Cuban-Americans wishing to visit family members in Cuba. With this anticipated move the number of U.S. travelers to Cuba is expected to nearly triple from the current 10,000 per month to nearly 30,000 per month. This dramatic increase for travel to Cuba will consequently create a need for a substantial increase in the number of direct air charter flights from the U.S. to Cuba from the current 3 flights a day to approximately eight to ten flights per day. Currently, there are seven air charter companies operating flights from Miami to Cuba, but no flights originate from one of the largest concentrations of Cuban-Americans living in the Tampa-St. Petersburg-Clearwater Metropolitan Area.

My office deals with the personal family struggles that travel restrictions bring on a regular basis. Sons and daughters, brothers and sisters, and grandsons and granddaughters are

unable to visit sick or dying relatives in Cuba. In their quest to travel to Cuba to say goodbye or comfort a loved one, they are subjected to the worst kind of bureaucratic red tape because of the restrictions. The addition of Tampa International Airport as a departure point for charter flights to Cuba may be one less burden these families have to face.

Implementation of this nonstop air charter service from Tampa International Airport would be fully coordinated with Tampa International Airport, Transportation Security Administration and Customs & Border Protection officials to insure that flights are scheduled during standard airport operating hours avoiding additional costs that might result from officials having to work overtime.

I appreciate your consideration of this request and if you have any questions or require additional information, please feel free to contact me or Louis E. Miller at your convenience. His email address is [lmiller@tampaairport.com](mailto:lmiller@tampaairport.com) and his telephone number is (813) 870-8705.

Respectfully,



Kathy Castor  
U.S. Representative  
Florida – District 11

cc: Louis E. Miller, Executive Director  
Tampa International Airport