

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

December 17, 2024

The Honorable Joseph Biden
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. President,

We urge you, in your remaining days in office, to restore two key aspects of the policy of the Obama-Biden Administration towards Cuba: (1) remove Cuba from the list of state sponsors of terrorism; and (2) restore the right of Americans to travel freely to Cuba as they can to every other country except North Korea, and end the Trump era “Cuba prohibition lists” that restrict where Americans can stay, where they can eat, and what they can buy and bring home.

The Obama-Biden policy of positive engagement was squarely in the national interest when it was adopted ten years ago today, and it was praised by a wide range of constituencies throughout this country. For two years, the approach you took with President Obama advanced U.S. security and enhanced the lives of the Cuban people.

Today, after nearly eight years of unilateral sanctions and isolation, the national interest in restoring the Obama-Biden policy is even more urgent and compelling:

- **The decades-long policy of economic, trade, and travel sanctions and restrictions has produced no benefits, achieving none of our policy objectives.** Cuba is no closer to becoming a democracy today than it was in 1961, and the human rights situation is worse than it was in 2017, especially since the crackdown of July 2021. And, with extreme shortages of food, medicines, fuel, and electricity, the Cuban people are now suffering their worst humanitarian crisis since the collapse of the Soviet Union.
- **Our sanctions against Cuba are a glaring contradiction to the Administration’s policy of addressing the “root causes” of migration.** The past eight years have been catastrophic for the Cuban people. Since 2021, the standard of living of average Cubans has plummeted, resulting in extreme hardship and causing over 1.5 million desperate people to flee the island—more than half of whom have come to the United States. This mass exodus of irregular migrants is unprecedented in Cuban history.
- **Our sanctions against Cuba have provided an opening for our adversaries.** Cuba has significant reserves of strategic minerals. Our adversaries, particularly Russia and China, have significantly expanded their influence with Havana since 2017.

- **Our sanctions have impeded U.S.-Cuba cooperation on important issues of mutual interest**, from migration and maritime security to narcotics interdiction, disaster response, environmental protection, and public health.
- **Our sanctions have infringed on Americans' rights and hurt our economic interests.** Sanctions against Cuba have prevented Americans from traveling to the island, and have stopped U.S. agriculture, construction, biotechnology, and other companies from competing in the Cuban market.
- **Our policy of sanctions has put us at odds with allies and partners in this hemisphere and Europe**, none of whom support it and who deeply resent its extraterritorial reach.

There is no justifiable or practical reason to continue a policy of sanctions against a country whose government poses no threat to the United States, and whose leaders have long profited by blaming our sanctions to deflect domestic criticism of their own repressive and bankrupt policies.

Indeed, the United States routinely engages diplomatically and economically with authoritarian governments with which we have profound disagreements. As you have noted many times, we do so not as a favor to those regimes but because a pragmatic approach best serves U.S. national interests and is far more likely to benefit the people of those countries. Cuba is no different. In fact, Americans have far more in common with the Cuban people than with those of many countries that are ruled by autocratic regimes, some of which are U.S. partners.

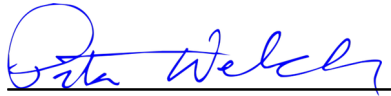
We recognize that given the limited time remaining in your presidency it is unrealistic to restore the Obama-Biden policy in its entirety. We therefore urge you to take these two critically important steps:

- **Remove Cuba from the list of state sponsors of terrorism.** Cuba's presence on the list has no factual or legal basis, as a comprehensive national security review conducted during the Obama-Biden administration established. Beyond depreciating the credibility of the list and U.S. efforts to fight actual terrorism, Cuba's status on the list compromises the private sector's ability to conduct basic commercial transactions, hinders the ability of Cubans to import much needed medical equipment, and impedes humanitarian efforts to address the current crisis of deprivation in Cuba.
- **Restore the right of Americans to travel freely to Cuba** as they can to every other country except North Korea, and end the Trump era "Cuba prohibition lists" that restrict where Americans can stay, where they can eat, and what they can buy and bring home.

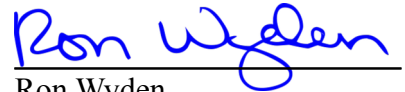
We recognize that only Congress can repeal the embargo against Cuba. But as the Obama-Biden Administration demonstrated, you have the executive authority to change U.S. policy in ways that would materially benefit the people of both countries and serve our national interests.

We will actively endorse and support you in this endeavor.

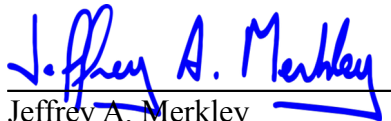
Sincerely,



Peter Welch
United States Senator



Ron Wyden
United States Senator



Jeffrey A. Merkley
United States Senator



Chris Van Hollen
United States Senator



Bernard Sanders
United States Senator

