



Peace and Justice  
Commission

CONSENT CALENDAR  
February 8, 2022

To: Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Council  
From: Peace and Justice Commission  
Submitted by: George Lippman, Chairperson, Peace and Justice Commission  
Subject: Normalize Diplomatic and Economic Relations with Cuba

RECOMMENDATION

Adopt a Resolution supporting normalization of diplomatic and economic relations between the U.S. and Cuba, initiated by Cuba solidarity organizations in the U.S.

Send a letter with the enclosed resolution to President Biden, Secretary of State Antony Blinken, Senators Feinstein and Padilla, and Congresswoman Barbara Lee.

FISCAL IMPACTS OF RECOMMENDATION

Minimal impact to staff time.

CURRENT SITUATION AND ITS EFFECTS

The Trump administration imposed 243 new sanctions upon Cuba. Despite campaign promises, President Biden has failed to reverse the sanctions that former President Trump imposed on Cuba. Travel by American citizens to Cuba remains restricted, and Cuba remains on the state sponsors of terrorism list where Trump placed it.

The embargo continues to inflict extreme hardship on the Cuban people by creating shortages of food and medicine, severely restricting financial and trade opportunities and has even prevented Cuba from obtaining medical equipment and supplies to address the COVID-19 pandemic.

A majority of House Democrats wrote President Biden on December 16, 2021, led by four members including Rep. Barbara Lee, asking him to suspend U.S. regulations that prevent food, medicine, remittances, and other humanitarian assistance from reaching the Cuban people.

At its regular meeting of December 13, 2021, the Peace and Justice Commission unanimously proposed the attached resolution for the City Council to call for normalization of diplomatic and economic relations between the U.S. and Cuba.

M/S/C: (Bohn/Morizawa)

Ayes: Bohn, Gussman, Lippman, Maran, Morizawa, Rodriguez

Noes: None.

Abstain: None.

### BACKGROUND

Beginning in October 1960, the United States government imposed an economic, commercial and financial embargo on Cuba that not only prevents most engagement and trade with the United States, but also punishes other countries that continue to engage with Cuba.

This embargo continues to inflict extreme hardship on the Cuban people by creating shortages of food and medicine, severely restricting financial and trade opportunities and has even prevented Cuba from obtaining medical equipment and supplies to address the COVID-10 pandemic.

In December 2014, U.S. President Barack Obama and Cuban President Raúl Castro announced that they would begin normalizing relations between the two countries and would establish diplomatic relations, an agreement that was enthusiastically embraced by the Cuban people.

### ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY AND CLIMATE IMPACTS

No identifiable impact.

### RATIONALE FOR RECOMMENDATION

The Peace and Justice Commission is charged in its mandate to “advise the City Council and Berkeley Unified School District on all matters relating to peace and social justice...support for human rights and self-determination around the world...help develop proposals for the City Council and the School Board for actions in furtherance of the goals of peace and justice, and help publicize such actions in the community...initiate and develop cultural and educational foreign exchange.” It is time for the people of the U.S. and Cuba to replace embargo, sanction, and blockade with positive international exchange.

### ALTERNATIVE ACTIONS CONSIDERED

None

### CITY MANAGER

The City Manager takes no position on the content and recommendations of the Commission’s Report.

CONTACT PERSON

Okeya Vance-Dozier, Peace and Justice Commission Secretary, City Manager's Office,  
(510) 529-5376

Attachments:

1: Resolution

Exhibit A: Cuba Fact Sheet

RESOLUTION NO. ##,###-N.S.

NORMALIZE DIPLOMATIC AND ECONOMIC RELATIONS WITH CUBA

WHEREAS, the Peace and Justice Commission advises the City Council on all matters relating to the City of Berkeley's role in issues of peace and social justice (Berkeley Municipal Code Chapter 3.68.070); and

WHEREAS, beginning in October 1960, the United States government imposed an economic, commercial and financial embargo on Cuba that not only prevents most engagement and trade with the United States, but also punishes other countries that continue to engage with Cuba; and

WHEREAS, this embargo continues to inflict extreme hardship on the Cuban people by creating shortages of food and medicine, severely restricting financial and trade opportunities and has even prevented Cuba from obtaining medical equipment and supplies to address the COVID-19 pandemic;<sup>1</sup> and

WHEREAS, both the Cuban government and the United Nations have estimated that the embargo has cost the Cuban economy \$130 billion over six decades;<sup>2</sup> and

WHEREAS, in December 2014, President Barack Obama and Cuban President Raúl Castro announced that they would begin normalizing relations between the two countries and would establish diplomatic relations, an agreement that was enthusiastically embraced by the Cuban people;<sup>3</sup> and

WHEREAS, President Obama removed Cuba from the United States state sponsors of terrorism list; and

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<sup>1</sup> "Amnesty International Urges End to US Embargo on Cuba," February 19, 2011, <https://medicc.org/ns/amnesty-international-urges-end-to-us-embargo-on-cuba-cites-medicc/>

<sup>2</sup> "U.S. trade embargo has cost Cuba \$130 billion, U.N. says," Reuters, May 8, 2018, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-cuba-economy-un/u-s-trade-embargo-has-cost-cuba-130-billion-u-n-says-idUSKBN11A00T>

<sup>3</sup> "McGovern, Meeks, Lee, Rush Lead 114 Members of Congress Calling for Biden Administration to Support Human Rights & Humanitarian Needs in Cuba," December 16, 2021, <https://mcgovern.house.gov/news/documentsingle.aspx?DocumentID=398780>

WHEREAS, most Americans, including Cuban Americans, oppose the United States embargo and tens of thousands have visited the island when travel restrictions were relaxed;<sup>4</sup> and

WHEREAS, the Trump administration imposed 243 new sanctions upon Cuba, including restrictions on Cuban-Americans to send remittances to families and businesses in Cuba, and reinstated Cuba to the state sponsor of terrorism list; and

WHEREAS, for each of the last 29 years, the United Nations General Assembly has overwhelmingly voted to support the end of the United States blockade against Cuba; and

WHEREAS, despite campaign promises, President Biden has failed to reverse the sanctions that former President Trump imposed on Cuba.<sup>5</sup>

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Council of the City of Berkeley that the Council urges President Biden to restore diplomatic relations with Cuba, including restoring the full operations of the United States Embassy in Havana; and that the well-being of the Cuban people shall be the centerpiece of United States policies towards Cuba.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Council of the City of Berkeley urges President Biden and Congress to remove Cuba from the United States list of state sponsors of terrorism; and to immediately close the United States military base at Guantanamo Bay and return the occupied territory in Guantanamo to Cuba.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Council of the City of Berkeley urges President Biden and Congress to immediately reverse all sanctions against Cuba by the United States and end all aspects of the United States embargo against Cuba, including restrictions on travel to Cuba by U.S. citizens and residents, so that the peoples of Cuba and the United States can freely travel between the countries.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Council of the City of Berkeley asks the City Clerk send a copy of this resolution to President Joseph R. Biden, Secretary of State Antony J. Blinken, Senators Dianne Feinstein and Alex Padilla, and Representative Barbara Lee.

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<sup>4</sup> "Most Americans Support Ending Cuba Embargo Times Poll Finds," New York Times, March 21, 2016, <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/projects/cp/international/obama-in-cuba/most-americans-support-ending-cuba-embargo-nyt-poll-finds>

<sup>5</sup> McGovern letter

## EXHIBIT A

### Fact Sheet on U.S.-Cuba Relations

#### **THE U.S. ECONOMIC BLOCKADE AGAINST CUBA**

The U.S. embargo and policies operate as a blockade against Cuba. It creates shortages of food, medicine, financial and trade opportunities and continues to inflict hardship on the men, women, and children of Cuba.

In 1960, the United States government imposed an economic, commercial, and financial embargo against Cuba. The 1996 Helms Burton Act extended the extraterritorial application of the initial embargo to apply to foreign companies trading with Cuba.

On December 17, 2014, U.S. President Barack Obama and then Cuban President Raul Castro announced a new era of relations between the two countries and agreed to reestablish diplomatic relations. Accordingly, Cuba and the U.S. re-opened their respective embassies in 2015.

The Trump administration reversed course and tightened the blockade by instituting 243 additional sanctions, including many during the pandemic. In the final days of his term, Trump placed Cuba back on the "State Sponsors of Terrorism" list. Being placed on this list exposes countries to numerous other sanctions, including restrictions on U.S. foreign assistance; a ban on defense exports and sales; certain controls over exports of dual use items; and miscellaneous financial and other restrictions.

Despite campaign promises, the Biden administration has failed to reverse any of Trump's actions and has done nothing to alleviate hardship.

On June 23, 2021, in the United Nations General Assembly a total of 184 countries supported Cuba's motion for the end of the U.S. blockade. It was the 29th year that the vote to end the embargo was overwhelming supported by the world's delegates. Only the U.S. and Israel voted to maintain the U.S. embargo. The majority of the people of the United States and the world believe this embargo is ineffective, inhumane and in violation of U.S. laws and international conventions.

#### **CUBA'S HISTORY OF MEDICAL ACHIEVEMENTS AND INTERNATIONAL AID TO OTHER COUNTRIES**

Cuba has a long history of providing international medical aid to other countries. Many of its medical personnel are directly involved in the fight against COVID-19 as members of the specially trained Henry Reeve International Medical Brigade against Disasters and Serious Epidemics. One of the first countries to offer aid to the U.S. after Hurricane

Katrina, Cuba offered to send 1,586 doctors and 26 tons of medicine. This aid was rejected by the State Department.

Over the past year alone, Cuba has sent 3,700 health workers in 52 international medical brigades to 39 countries overwhelmed by the pandemic. Cuba's international medical brigades have treated patients and saved lives for the past 15 years in 53 countries confronting natural disasters and serious epidemics, such as the Ebola crisis in West Africa. It has assisted in many epidemics around the world, including dengue fever, HIV, swine flu, and hepatitis. Despite the importance of international Cuban medical assistance, the U.S. has attempted to stop other countries from accepting Cuban medical brigades, even claiming that Cuba's medical brigades represent a form of human trafficking.

In 2015 the World Health Organization recognized Cuba's medical system as a worldwide leader in biotechnology, and Cuba has made significant contributions to the international medical field, including a drug that prevents 77% of diabetic amputations.

Early in the pandemic, Cuba developed effective treatment regimens for patients and prevention protocols for health workers, including its drug Interferon Alpha 2B Recombinant and community-based treatment and contact tracing.

Cuba has developed five internationally recognized candidate COVID-19 vaccines. By the end of October 2021 more than 98% of Cuba's 11.3 million people had received at least a first shot of a three-dose immunization regimen with Cuban-made vaccines (Abdala, Soberana-2 and Soberana-plus). More than 60% of the population, ages 2 and older, had been fully vaccinated. Cuba is very likely to reach its goal of 98% fully vaccinated by December 2021. Cuba also plans to produce millions of doses of its vaccines, beyond what is needed domestically, to meet its commitment to sharing its low-cost vaccines with poor countries in the developing world.

There is precedent for collaborative initiatives between Cuba and U.S. cities. A few examples include San Francisco CA, Seattle WA, Minneapolis MN, Chicago IL, Pittsburgh PA, Cambridge, MA, which all overwhelmingly passed a resolution supporting medical collaboration.

There have also been multi-year joint ventures between Cuba's Center for Molecular Immunology and Buffalo's Roswell Park Comprehensive Cancer Center in developing CIMAvax, the Cuban lung cancer vaccine, as well as a collaboration between medical personnel from Cuba and the University of Illinois on infant mortality in Chicago.

The U.S. blockade of Cuba has severely restricted collaboration on scientific and medical research. The blockade not only causes great harm to Cuba, it also denies U.S. citizens access to Cuban medical technology such as the diabetes drug Heberpot-P, vaccines for meningitis B and hepatitis B, monoclonal antibodies for kidney transplants, as well as the

only therapeutic vaccine in the world against advanced lung cancer, called CIMA V AX-EGF.

### **EFFORTS IN THE U.S. TO END THE BLOCKADE AND PROVIDE HUMANITARIAN RELIEF TO CUBA**

There are hundreds of organizations throughout the world that are working to end the blockade against Cuba. In the U.S., the National Network on Cuba (NNOC) and its 58 local, state and national organizations throughout the country stand in solidarity with Cuba and have been working diligently to end the blockade:

- Over 40 resolutions have been passed by churches, city councils, labor unions, state legislators and school boards to call for the end of the U.S. blockade against Cuba. These resolutions represent the will of 41 million people in the United States.
- Car and bike caravans in support of Cuba occur monthly in Miami and other cities across the U.S. and around the world.
- The University of Minnesota leaders commenced and continue formal medical collaboration with Cuba to battle COVID-19.
- Federal legislation to end the embargo (S.249, H.R.3625) and other bills in support of Cuba (S.1694, H.R.198) is pending,
- U.S. residents generously donated more than \$680,000 to send over 6 million syringes to Cuba to enable Cuba to administer its COVID-19 vaccines to its people
- U.S. residents are providing humanitarian aid to Cuba by raising funds to purchase and ship food and medical supplies to counter the shortages caused by the blockade and Trump sanctions.
- IFCO/Pastors for Peace, Code Pink, Altruistas, Marazul Tours, and Building Relations with Cuban Labor have regular delegations to Cuba so that U.S. residents can experience Cuba themselves and see how the U.S. blockade affects the people of Cuba.

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Sources:

National Network on Cuba

<http://nnoc.info>

IFCO-Pastors for Peace

<https://ifconews.org>