

PITTSBURGH-MATANZAS SISTER CITIES PARTNERSHIP

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Hon. Jim Ferlo, Pres. – 412-952-3364 • Lisa Valanti, V-Pres. – 412-303-1247

OPEN LETTER TO THE CITIZENS & OFFICIALS OF MATANZAS, CUBA 7-12-2021

OUR ORGANIZATION and thousands of U. S. citizens have worked tirelessly over many years to change the official policies of our government that have created obstacles in Cuba's ability to thrive and build a successful economy. Our own country has engaged in illegal and aggressive measures aimed at de-stabilizing the ability of Cuba to build a society that succeeds in meeting the needs and priorities of the Cuban people. This reality has been documented and supported most recently by a vote of 187-2 nations all around the globe who voted on June 23, 2021 in the United Nations condemning the illegal, immoral and counterproductive blockade imposed on Cuba by the government of the United States.

We heralded the actions of former President Barack Obama who created a historic change in U.S. policy by restoring the path of diplomacy and a more open relationship with Cuba. However, President Trump and now the Biden-Harris administration have undermined that initiative by imposing even harsher economic and political terror on the aspirations of the Cuban people to build their economy and respond to the needs of their citizens. Not unlike the realities facing our own country and nations around the globe the Covid-19 pandemic exacerbated the budgetary constraints of the Cuban economy with an 11 percent reduction in Cuba's gross national product (GNP). U.S. economic, monetary and political measures have undermined and placed even more strain on Cuba's ability to provide pandemic relief, build its burgeoning private sector, generate wealth from its enviable tourist business, and work through its efforts toward a more traditional market economy based on a one currency system.

Our organization recently donated \$5,000 to the national effort led by **Global Health Partners (NYC)** which is purchasing and donating 6 million syringes to Cuba to support COVID-19 vaccination campaigns in Matanzas and throughout Cuba. Our Pittsburgh based **Global Links**, who has a 27-year history of collaborating to support public health in Cuba, is coordinating this humanitarian response.

We respect the right of citizens to peacefully protest to redress legitimate grievances but we can also appreciate and understand that the accurate basis of citizen protests should be directed at the aggressive laws and policies of our own government that spends hundreds of millions of our tax dollars in nefarious and aggressive actions seeking to undermine the positive and quality of life aspects of the Cuban Revolution in numerous measurable world standards.

We call on our elected Congressional officials to enact the numerous pieces of legislation that would lift the economic blockade and travel ban imposed on Cuba. We demand that the Biden-Harris administration restore diplomatic communication with the government of Cuba on the basis of mutual respect for sovereignty. **We condemn the outrageous utterances of the Mayor of Miami who just this week called for U.S. military intervention in Cuba!** We demand peaceful and productive interactions with the people and government of Cuba!



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