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June 10, 2019

The Honorable Michael Pompeo  
Secretary of State  
U.S. Department of State  
Washington, D.C. 20520

Dear Secretary Pompeo,

In light of monumental steps in U.S.-Cuba policy over the past two years, I write to bring to your attention certain issues regarding the visa process for Cuban nationals, particularly pro-democracy and human rights activists, as well as those applying under the Cuban Family Reunification Parole (CFRP) program. I also respectfully request that you assess whether there might be available ways to improve U.S. consular access to these non-regime Cuban nationals seeking U.S. entry.

The President and his administration have shown remarkable leadership in strengthening policy toward Cuba through tough sanctions that deny resources to the Cuban military, and promote outreach to the Cuban people. As the regime in Cuba continues to subvert democracy in Venezuela and Nicaragua, while brutally oppressing the Cuban people, current U.S. policy which extends strong solidarity to the Cuban people while isolating their oppressors is essential to furthering U.S. interests in our hemisphere. I have repeatedly praised the President's decisions to cut off resources to the Cuban military, curtail abuses by ending cruises to Cuba and people to people travel, and allow lawsuits to proceed under Title III of the LIBERTAD Act of 1996. These steps are crucial toward promoting democracy, essential freedoms, and human rights in Cuba. I have and will continue to roundly commend the President and his administration for these important strides in furthering America's commitment to freedom for the Cuban people.

It is important to continue to highlight these monumental steps forward in U.S.-Cuba policy. In fact, their significance cannot be overstated. In the context of these entirely positive developments, I also want to ensure that you are aware about an issue that concerns many of my constituents. Since the health attacks occurred against U.S. personnel stationed in Cuba, and the regime's failure to protect them as required under the Vienna Convention, most U.S. Havana-based consular services have ended. As a result, innocent Cuban nationals face extreme hardships when applying for lawful U.S. entry. As I have noted in previous letters, this has resulted in making it nearly impossible for pro-democracy activists and those applying under the CFRP program to gain lawful U.S. entry. I, and some of my constituents, have also been alarmed when regime operatives and apologists, such as the musicians of Los Van Van, received visas for a concert later this month. It is troubling when regime operatives and apologists seem to enter the U.S. with relative ease, while deserving Cubans face nearly insurmountable expense and travel requirements when applying for U.S. entry. In regard to the CFRP in particular, some have already paid fees,

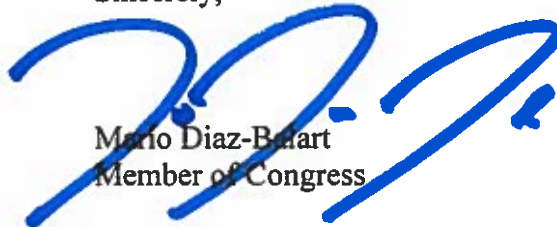
scheduled appointments, and undergone the necessary medical examinations at considerable personal cost and adversely impacts my constituents. I raise this issue because it appears inconsistent with our current strong U.S.-Cuba policy to grant the extraordinary privilege of U.S. entry to regime and pro-regime individuals who actively subvert U.S. interests, while hindering U.S. entry to deserving Cuban nationals.

Admirably, President Trump and his administration have implemented tough sanctions while extending solidarity to the Cuban people in their struggle for freedom. I appreciate these changes, as well as the State Department's fundamental duty to protect U.S. personnel stationed abroad. Clearly, the regime in Cuba has a remarkably poor record in upholding its Vienna Convention duties in regard to U.S. diplomats, and the recent sonic attacks are further evidence of its malevolence. In light of the President's important foreign policy achievements, I believe that it is important to ensure that you are aware of this lingering issue. Many of my constituents fully appreciate that U.S. entry is an extraordinary privilege, and that the process for granting that extraordinary privilege should reflect U.S. foreign policy. Unfortunately, the reduction in staff due to the attacks on U.S. personnel in Cuba appears to have led to the unintentional consequence of crippling consular services for innocent Cuban nationals.

I strongly and proudly support the substantial advances in U.S.-Cuba policy undertaken by the President and his administration, and look forward to continuing to work with you in promoting freedom and democracy for the long-suffering Cuban people. Accordingly, within all applicable rules and regulations, and consistent with the President's policy goals, I respectfully suggest that you consider whether there are ways to improve U.S. consular access to innocent Cuban nationals, particularly pro-democracy and human rights activists, as well as those seeking to reunite with their families under the CFRP program.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,



Mario Diaz-Balart  
Member of Congress