

**Congress of the United States**  
Washington, DC 20515

November 12, 2021

President Joseph Biden  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Ave, N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear President Biden,

As Members of Congress who support freedom and democracy in Cuba, we believe that you should take decisive and expeditious action to support the Cuban people in their demands for freedom.

Regrettably, we believe your administration has been slow to act in support of the Cuban people and their courageous calls for democracy and human rights in the wake of widespread protests that began on July 11, 2021. The Cuban regime continues to violate the rights to free expression and access to free, independent sources of information. Freedom House in its 2021 Freedom on the Net report found that Cuba had the fourth lowest score out of 88 countries for blocking social media, blocking political, social, or religious content, technical attacks on human rights organizations or activists, physical attacks on bloggers or ICT users, and imprisonment of bloggers or ICT users. As a July 12, 2021 AP article “Cuba’s internet cutoff: A go-to tactic to suppress dissent” described, the regime shuts down access to the internet to silence dissent, and impedes international observation efforts.

We believe your administration has failed to harness American ingenuity and the private sector to allow the Cuban people to communicate with each other, and with the outside world via unfettered access to the internet, an action which enjoys bipartisan support in the U.S. Congress and broad support in the Cuban American community. You still have an opportunity to stand with the Cuban people in their pleas for freedom. For example, we understand that your administration is performing a Cuba policy review that includes assessing ways to increase remittances to the island, expand staff at the U.S. embassy in Havana, and ensure unfettered internet access to the island (“FACT SHEET: Biden-Harris Administration Measures on Cuba,” July 22, 2021). However, other than the formation of working groups and meetings several months ago, we have not seen results from this review to help the Cuban people or meet their pleas with the urgency that they deserve. Additionally, we have reason to be concerned about the outcome of the policy review. For example, despite repeated requests, you have refused to meet with the Republican Leader’s Advisory team, which includes Members of Congress who represent the vast majority of Cuban Americans. We are also concerned that your administration has failed to guarantee adequate funding for the Office of Cuba Broadcasting (OCB) at a time when the Cuban people desperately need independent, outside information. Your request in the Congressional Budget Justification for fiscal year 2022 provided less than \$13 million to OCB which, if it were to become law, would be a devastating cut to this important agency. Regrettably, the House and Senate State, Foreign Operations and Related Programs bills for fiscal year 2022 followed your lead. And, in a particularly disturbing sign, your administration weakened sanctions on the Cuban regime’s chief ally and benefactor, Venezuela’s Maduro dictatorship, on the day following the July 11 protests. Additionally, the formation of a remittances working group misdirects attention to a tangential issue that does not answer the Cuban people’s calls for freedom. Even worse, we are concerned that expanding remittances

could provide a source of revenue to the Cuban people's oppressors. We have concerns that the outcome of the policy review will be ineffective, counterproductive, and too late.

Time is of the essence. The communist dictatorship in Cuba is once again engaging in a widespread crackdown as pro-democracy and human rights activists plan further protests for November 15. Many courageous activists, such as Luis Manuel Otero Alcántara, remain imprisoned to this day, and several have engaged in hunger strikes to protest their unjust incarceration (Human Rights Watch, "Case descriptions of protesters detained by the Cuban government, July 2021," published October 19, 2021, and *Miami Herald*, "Jailed Cuban Artist Otero Alcantara is on hunger strike," October 5, 2021). We continue to encourage you to place democracy and human rights as the impetus behind your policy toward Cuba. We appreciate that your administration imposed Global Magnitsky sanctions on many of those involved in oppressing July 11 protesters, and believe that you should continue finding ways to hold those who engage in corruption and human rights abuses accountable with tough sanctions. Decisive action is imperative to extend solidarity with the Cuban people in their cause for freedom, and to ensure that prospective human rights abusers understand that there will be consequences for their actions.

The opportunity is slipping for you to actively lead a coordinated, global effort of likeminded partners to stand with the longsuffering Cuban people in their efforts to attain freedom. For these reasons, within all applicable rules and regulations, we respectfully request that you assess every tool at your disposal, including democracy programming, broadcasting, global diplomacy and sanctions, to support the longsuffering Cuban people in their pleas for freedom.

Sincerely,



Mario Diaz-Balart  
Member of Congress



Maria Elvira Salazar  
Member of Congress



Carlos A. Gimenez  
Member of Congress



Nicole Malliotakis  
Member of Congress



Byron Donalds  
Member of Congress



Victoria Spartz  
Member of Congress



Jenniffer González-Colón  
Member of Congress