

Representative Richard Durbin
525 S. 8th Street
Springfield, Illinois 62703

Dear Representative Durbin,

As a member of First Presbyterian Church in Springfield, Illinois, which has a partner church in Sancti Spiritus, Cuba, I wish to express my appreciation for your work in Congress. In this spirit, I would like to respectfully request that immediate attention be given to ending the embargo and returning U.S.-Cuba policy toward reconciliation and negotiation.

Our congregation is part of the Cuba Partners Network of the Presbyterian Church (USA). Presbyterian Churches throughout the United States and Cuba have had a continuous, uninterrupted relationship since the 1890s. In 1985, the Presbyterian Church (USA) and the Presbyterian-Reformed Church in Cuba signed a Mutual Mission Agreement that spawned over 90 partnerships between our churches, presbyteries, and synods.

As a result, U.S. Presbyterians have been visiting Cuba and Cuban pastors and congregants have visited the U.S. for decades, giving our church members insights into the daily lives of Cubans including the hardships they have endured as a result of U.S. policy restrictions especially caused by the embargo. **Since the initial conception of our church's relationship with Sancti Spiritus in 2004, we have enjoyed 17 incoming or outgoing delegations to and from Sancti Spiritus involving 54 different people.** During this time, we have witnessed not only the strength, resilience, and inspiring commitment to God's Word of the Presbyterian-Reformed Church of Cuba, but also the unnecessary hardship and deprivation caused to the Cuban churches and people by U.S. policies of travel restriction, embargo (called a blockade by the Cuban people), and other forms of economic sanction.

I therefore ask you to sign on to the U.S.-Cuba Trade Act of 2021, introduced by Senator Ron Wyden of Oregon, along with Senator Patrick Leahy, Vermont, Senator Richard Durbin, Illinois, and Senator Jeff Merkley, Oregon. We request these U.S.-Cuba policy initiatives not only for our church partnerships but for the Cuban people. Together with our Cuban brothers and sisters in Christ, we seek, as stated in the Biblical text from Micah 6, "to do justice and walk humbly with our God."

Please note the list, on the back of this letter, of 13 reasons why the Cuba embargo/blockade needs to end as soon as possible. We therefore, implore the 117th Congress to take early and substantial steps toward reconciliation and justice between the U.S. and Cuban people including ending the Cuban embargo.

Sincerely,

First Presbyterian Church of Springfield, Illinois