

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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ORGANIZATIONS CALL FOR CUBA SANCTIONS SUSPENSION TO FACILITATE HUMANITARIAN AND MEDICAL SUPPLIES AMID COVID-19 PANDEMIC

WASHINGTON—The undersigned organizations call on the U.S. government to issue a time-bound suspension of sanctions on Cuba to facilitate the flow of desperately needed humanitarian and medical supplies to the Cuban people as they cope with the global COVID-19 pandemic.

These unprecedented times require us to recognize our common humanity and take immediate action to limit human suffering. Doing so will demonstrate U.S. compassion to the Cuban people and counter efforts by China and others to undermine the image of the United States as the leader in global humanitarian aid.

Though there are supposed to be humanitarian allowances under the embargo framework, in practice, there are severe limitations and obstacles to delivering humanitarian assistance to Cuba. We outline some of the practical challenges that must be addressed below.

The COVID-19 pandemic poses substantial threats to public health and disrupts and endangers the lives of many people around the world, and Cuba is no exception. This outbreak hits Cuba at a precarious moment as its economy is in crisis and food, medicine, and fuel are in short supply.

COVID-19 knows no borders nor is it held hostage by history or politics. The global community must do everything within its power to stop the spread of the virus, protect the people in its path, and ease the suffering it leaves in its wake. For the U.S. government, in the case of Cuba, this means suspending the sanctions that hurt the Cuban people the most, which include the following:

Remittance Caps

Caps on family and donative remittances to Cuba, and overly restrictive eligibility requirements for the remittance recipient, limit the ways families can support each other.

Sanctions Impeding Help from Other Countries

Companies and individuals from other countries that wish to help the Cuban people at this complicated moment through the sale of medical goods are limited by U.S. sanctions that restrict the percentage of U.S. content allowed in foreign sales to Cuba to less than 10%. Furthermore, U.S. sanctions on Cuba are so far-reaching that many foreign companies are hesitant to run the risk associated with such a heavily-sanctioned environment.

Sanctions Impeding Donations of Medicine and Medical Equipment

U.S.-origin donations of medicines and medical equipment to Cuba, such as testing kits and respiratory devices, require a [specific license](#), which takes time and a tremendous amount of

paperwork. Additionally, onerous end-user verification requirements for the exportation of medical supplies, instruments, and equipment, severely restrict the ability of such goods to reach the Cuban people.

Financial Transactions

For fear of running afoul of a far-reaching and ever-shifting U.S. sanctions regime toward Cuba, banks are hesitant to process financial transactions related to Cuba.

Sanctions Restricting Support for the Cuban People

While there is a license exception that allows for the export of certain items to Cuba that are intended to support the Cuban people, the Department of Commerce [requires](#) that the exporter verify the end-user of those items and determine with certainty that they will only benefit the Cuban people and not Cuban government or communist party officials. U.S. companies conducting trade with Cuba tell us this requirement places too high a bar on U.S. exporters, with the end result being that these goods never make it to Cuba's most vulnerable citizens.

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