



Department of Social Development and World Peace

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March 21, 2007

The Honorable Charles B. Rangel
2354 Rayburn House Office Building
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

FAX: 202-225-0816

Dear Representative Rangel,

I write as chairman of the Committee on International Policy of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops to applaud your initiative, together with Representative Jeff Flake and others, in sponsoring HR 654, a bill to allow travel between the United States and Cuba.

The USCCB has for many years consistently called for relaxing the sanctions against Cuba. These policies have largely failed to achieve greater freedom, democracy and respect for human life. At the same time, our nation's counterproductive policies have unnecessarily alienated many in the hemisphere who should be our friends and allies, and brought needless hardship on the Cuban people. It continues to be our position that the goals of improving the lives of the Cuban people and encouraging democracy in Cuba will best be advanced through more rather than less contact between the Cuban and American people.

The restrictions on Cubans residing in this country are particularly objectionable. No one should be prevented from visiting a dying relative or attending a loved one's funeral simply for having traveled to Cuba once in the previous three years. It is an inhumane policy that does no honor to our country. These most recent restrictions have increasingly made more difficult and onerous the legitimate travel of academics, journalists, religious leaders and other U.S. citizens to the island.

I am pleased to note that many other members of the House of Representatives have joined you and the chairs of the Cuba Working Group, Mr. Flake and Mr. Delahunt, in co-sponsoring this legislation. I look forward to welcoming a companion bill in the Senate and hope that it will merit the support of the Congress.

With thanks and best wishes, I remain

Sincerely yours,

Most Reverend Thomas G. Wenski
Bishop of Orlando
Chairman
Committee on International Policy