



Committee on International Justice and Peace

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March 8, 2010

[This letter was sent to the members of the Members of the House Agriculture Committee and other members as identified.]

Dear Representative :

As chairman of the Committee on International Justice and Peace of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) I write to express support for H.R. 4645, a bill which removes obstacles to legal sales of United States agricultural commodities to Cuba and ends restrictions on all Americans traveling to Cuba. Our Conference of Bishops supports both objectives of this legislation as ways to advance the goal of increasing engagement with the people of Cuba. We urge you to support this important piece of legislation.

The USCCB has for many years consistently called for relaxing the sanctions against Cuba. These policies have largely failed to promote greater freedom, democracy and respect for human rights in Cuba. At the same time, our nation's counterproductive policies have unnecessarily alienated many other countries in the hemisphere. Improving the lives of the Cuban people and encouraging democracy and human rights in Cuba will best be advanced through more, rather than less, contact between the Cuban and American people. Removing the barriers to agricultural exports to Cuba, and thus deepening the trade relationship, is one step toward this goal.

While our Conference welcomed the Administration's lifting of travel restrictions for Cuban Americans, ongoing restrictions on the ability of other Americans to travel to Cuba, even when accompanying their Cuban American relatives, remain objectionable. No one should be prevented from supporting a spouse in visiting a dying relative or attending a family funeral simply because he or she is not Cuban American. We welcome H.R. 4645 because it lifts all restrictions on travel by all U.S. citizens to Cuba.

Thank you for your consideration of support for H.R. 4645, The Travel Restriction Reform and Export Enhancement Act.

Sincerely yours,

Most Reverend Howard J. Hubbard
Bishop of Albany
Chairman, Committee on International Justice and Peace