



Committee on International Justice and Peace

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November 18, 2009

Representative Howard L. Berman
Chairman
Committee on Foreign Affairs

Dear Chairman Berman:

I write as chairman of the Committee on International Justice and Peace of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) to express support for H.R. 874, 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 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.

Existing restrictions on the ability of Cubans residing in this country to travel to Cuba are particularly objectionable. No one should be prevented from visiting a dying relative or attending a loved one's funeral simply because he or she has traveled to Cuba once in the previous three years. Earlier this year we supported changes to this inhumane policy by the Administration of President Obama which adjusted administrative rules to facilitate travel by Cuban Americans to Cuba. Such changes, however welcome, cannot replace the need for the Congressional action contained in H.R. 874 that would lift all restrictions on travel by all U.S. citizens to Cuba.

Our Conference of Bishops supports final passage of this important piece of legislation.

Sincerely yours,

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