



Legislation Details (With Text)

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Title: WHEREAS, the City of Pittsburgh has long been a recognized leader in pursuing respectful and supportive relationships with the people and government of Cuba through City Council Resolution, delegation visits and actions of previous Administrations including the establishment of an official sister city relationship with Matanzas, Cuba, also celebrated as a “Three Rivers City” and “City of Bridges” in a formal twinning agreement ceremony signed in Matanzas, Cuba on February 20, 1998; and,

Sponsors: Anthony Coghill, All Members

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WHEREAS, the City of Pittsburgh has long been a recognized leader in pursuing respectful and supportive relationships with the people and government of Cuba through City Council Resolution, delegation visits and actions of previous Administrations including the establishment of an official sister city relationship with Matanzas, Cuba, also celebrated as a “Three Rivers City” and “City of Bridges” in a formal twinning agreement ceremony signed in Matanzas, Cuba on February 20, 1998; and,

WHEREAS, Mayor William Peduto additionally traveled to Cuba to explore and promote mutual interests and understanding, and over the years thousands of Pittsburgh area residents have travelled to Cuba despite official U.S. government policy and roadblocks; and,

WHEREAS, the Pittsburgh-Matanzas Sister Cities Partnership has promoted countless rewarding relationships through meaningful, albeit limited opportunities for academic, business, humanitarian, cultural, sporting, environmental, medical and other exchanges as witnessed by several Cuban Ministers visiting our City together with congregate events involving the participation of hundreds of Pittsburghers including the July 30, 2016 youth boxing match on the Roberto Clemente Bridge, the first U S sporting event to be viewed live by more than three million Cubans via satellite; and,

WHEREAS, in 2015 a Western Pennsylvania trade delegation organized by the Pittsburgh-Matanzas Sister Cities Partnership and the Hibernian Celtic Athletic Fund, visited Havana and Matanzas and included Congressman Michael Doyle, County Executive Rich Fitzgerald, Councilwoman Natalia Rudiak, PA. Senate Majority Leader Joe Scarnati, and other elected and appointed officials as well representatives of the State Liquor Control Board, PPG Industries, Pittsburgh International Airport, Penn State, among others; and,

WHEREAS, the Pittsburgh-Matanzas delegation witnessed the signing of a formal Memorandum of Understanding between Penn State University and the University of Havana outlining multiple engagement programs for students, professors, research, sports, etc.; and,

WHEREAS, the 2015 delegation met with various government Ministers including the Ministry of Manufacturing that included visits to the historic and highly praised rum industry facilities moving the Pennsylvania LCB officials to apply to the federal Treasury Department for a license to purchase Cuban Rum as part of the Commonwealth's Sovereign State prerogatives; and,

WHEREAS, there is a shared opportunity for agricultural farmers in our Commonwealth and around the nation to benefit from direct profitable trade with Cuba, including dairy farmers here in Allegheny County now under extreme duress and in urgent need of new markets for milk, beef and other products, commodities that Cuba presently purchases from far away countries and wants to purchase from the U.S.; and,

WHEREAS, the more-than half a century old, counterproductive, unilateral economic, financial and commercial blockade condemned by 191 of 193 countries in the United Nations General Assembly and the unique disruptive travel restrictions applied to U.S. residents continue to this day despite the welcomed and historic actions of President Barack Obama who visited Cuba and

on December 17, 2014, with overwhelming public support, agreed to re-establish diplomatic relations, and opened Embassies in both countries; and,

WHEREAS, new, even more draconian restrictions under the Trump Administration further limit people-to-people travel and trade and attempt to turn back the clock on peaceful and meaningful engagement with Cuba, at a time when many other historic adversarial relationships are being revisited and re-established, relations with Cuba are exceptional in that they can only be changed and eliminated by acts of Congress and the repeal of the codified Helms-Burton and Torricelli Acts; and,

WHEREAS, numerous pieces of legislation in the U.S. House and Senate already enjoy tremendous support by both Republicans and Democrats alike, which would allow normal travel and unfettered fair economic trade with Cuba, including new markets critical for Pennsylvania; and,

WHEREAS, mutual trade and engagement between the United States and Cuba that benefits both countries has been desired and articulated particularly in the areas of food production, education, healthcare, tourism, arts, cultural and family exchanges, biotechnology and medical research, and the ENGAGE CUBA COALITION has already established 18 bipartisan statewide coalitions working in coordinated advocacy and lobbying activities, including a broad based council in Pennsylvania, which we hereby endorse and commend; and,

WHEREAS, in Cuba, voting took place at various levels of provincial and nationwide levels that witnessed 80 percent voter participation, electing 53 percent women, the second highest representation of women in governance worldwide, with 80 of the 605 elected Representatives between the ages of 18 and 35, and culminating in the election of President Miguel Diaz-Canel, the first leader born after the Cuban Revolution of 1959, hereby opening new opportunities for normalizing bilateral relations; and,

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the Council of the City of Pittsburgh urges President Donald Trump to respect the sovereignty of the Cuban people and renew productive and cooperative mutual engagement with Cuba and re-open a fully operational Embassy in Havana and allow Cuba to restore all diplomatic staff and services at their Washington, D.C. Embassy; and,

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Council of the City of Pittsburgh urges the Congress to pass the strategic pieces of legislation that would completely repeal the blockade and travel ban and that this Resolution be sent to the White House, Members of Congress, National Conference of Mayors, state and local legislative entities, and be promoted publicly.