

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

April 7, 2021

President Joseph R. Biden
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Ave.
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Biden,

We write to request, within all applicable rules and regulations, that your Congressional Budget Justification (CBJ) for fiscal year 2022 include an adequate funding level for the Office of Cuba Broadcasting (OCB) within the U.S. Agency for Global Media account at not less than \$30 million, and a similarly reasonable level for Cuba democracy programs within the Economic Support Fund (ESF) account at \$20 million.

The bill that established Radio Marti passed by a wide margin in the House and unanimously in the Senate in 1983. Congress passed the television arm of broadcasting to Cuba in 1990 through the Television Broadcasting to Cuba Act, again with solid, bipartisan support. Radio and TV Marti pierce the Cuban regime's information blockade to provide timely and reliable information to the Cuban people. This information service provides a critical service by connecting Cubans across the island, and linking Cuban pro-democracy activists with an expanding, global network of activists engaged in their own struggles for freedom and human rights in their respective countries. Funding at this level is essential for this broadcasting agency to provide accurate, uncensored information to the Cuban people, maintain staff, and continue measures to counteract the regime's jamming efforts.

The requested \$30 million for OCB represents a middle level of funding when compared to enactment levels in recent years. Enactment levels for OCB were approximately \$33.9 million for FY2007, \$33.4 million for FY2008, \$34.8 million for FY2009, and \$30.5 million for FY2010. For fiscal years 2011 through 2019, OCB received funding between \$27 million to just over \$29 million annually. However, OCB suffered cuts in FY2020 and FY2021, to just \$20.973 million, with an additional \$7 million transfer authority to USAGM intended to shore up OCB. However, USAGM has failed to fully use the transfer authority for FY2020, nor is it on track to use the full \$7 million for FY2021. That decision, coupled with the FY2020 and FY2021 cuts, have resulted in deleterious effects to OCB's efforts to broadcast to the Cuban people. In less than a year, the agency's 84 contractors have been reduced to just 21 contractors who perform vital functions such as satellite and other technology, programming support, and other vital services. We are concerned that further cuts would result in reductions in federal employee staff, and damage to OCB's operations at a time when the Cuban people need information from the outside world and from their peers on the island.

Additionally, the Cuba democracy program under the ESF account requires at least \$20 million for FY2022 to maintain solidarity with the Cuban people at a level equal to recent years. The United States has supported democracy programs in Cuba since 1996, and FY2008 marked the Cuba democracy program's highest level of funding at \$45.7 million. Since FY2014, and in most years in the past two decades, Cuba democracy programs have received \$20 million

annually. These programs are essential to supporting civil society, encouraging the free flow of information, promoting human rights, and providing assistance to political prisoners and their families. These programs, administered through the State Department, USAID, and the NED, are essential to laying the foundation for an eventual democratic transition.

Adequate funding for broadcasting to Cuba through OCB, and in support of democracy programs in Cuba, are paramount to furthering the fundamental U.S. policy goal of enabling a free and democratic Cuba. They are also of crucial importance to our states and our constituents. For these reasons, we respectfully request not less than \$30 million for OCB in your CBJ for fiscal year 2022.

We greatly appreciate your attention to this matter, and your commitment to ensuring the U.S. Government stands with the Cuban people in their struggle for freedom, human rights, and democracy.

Sincerely,



Mario Diaz-Balart
Member of Congress



Marco Rubio
U.S. Senator



Rick Scott
U.S. Senator



Albio Sires
Member of Congress



Debbie Wasserman Schultz
Member of Congress



Alex X. Mooney
Member of Congress



Anthony Gonzalez
Member of Congress



Maria Elvira Salazar
Member of Congress



Nicole Malliotakis
Member of Congress



Carlos A. Gimenez
Member of Congress

cc: Antony J. Blinken, Secretary of State
Kelu Chao, USAGM Acting CEO