

United States Senate
WASHINGTON, DC 20510-0908

September 4, 2024

The Honorable Antony Blinken
Secretary of State
U.S. Department of State
2201 C Street NW
Washington, D.C. 20522

Dear Secretary Blinken:

We write with concern over this administration's recent expansion of nonimmigrant visa (NIV) services at the U.S. Embassy in Havana, Cuba. We believe this decision does not serve America's interests. Instead, it only benefits Cuba's cruel, adversarial regime—a designated State Sponsor of Terrorism (SSOT)—and further endangers our national security.

This NIV expansion will be skewed toward benefitting members of the elite, ruling class. In Cuba, those closest to the regime are given opportunities that are denied to a majority of the island's residents. This includes the opportunity to receive formal higher education and gainful employment. Those who receive NIVs to come to the U.S. for those purposes will very likely have favorable relationships with the regime. Additionally, the regime has historically sponsored athletes, artists, and entertainers to spread its propaganda abroad. Only those who bring good tidings of the regime will be allowed to leave the island. It will be nearly impossible to provide proper vetting of potential NIV recipients given the regime's lack of transparency and our inadequate insight into the island. Given the risks associated with allowing agents of an SSOT to enter the country, it is unclear how the U.S. might benefit from these NIVs. We must assume that this is yet another case of the Biden-Harris Administration's appeasement of the regime.

This is far from the first time the Biden-Harris Administration has taken steps to placate the Cuban regime by easing migration restrictions. Recently, the administration introduced a parole program that has allowed former high-ranking regime officials and members of state security forces, all of whom are complicit in human rights abuses on the island, to infiltrate and reside in the U.S. The Biden-Harris Administration paused this program only after reports of widespread fraud and abuse, demonstrating our inability to properly vet individuals coming from the island.

What's more, this year, the Biden-Harris Administration lifted Cuba's designation as a "not fully cooperating" country on counterterrorism efforts, in spite of Cuba's status as one of only four SSOTs. The only reasonable motivation for removing this designation would be to mollify the regime that continues to harbor terrorists and U.S. fugitives and support militant groups in the region. The administration has also allowed officials of this terrorist-sympathizing regime to access secure facilities in U.S. airports, jeopardizing the well-being of our citizens and safety measures. Instead of ratcheting up pressure on these terrorist sympathizers, the Biden-

Harris Administration has decided to allow Cuban individuals and businesses to open U.S. bank accounts and access online banking—a concession the Cuban dictatorship will certainly leverage to continue funding its human rights abuses.

Rather than compelling the Cuban dictatorship to end its human rights abuses and bring democracy to the island, the Biden-Harris Administration has only looked for opportunities to pacify the regime and mend diplomatic relations. We see no other reason for expanding NIVs to Cuban individuals and no justification for why doing so serves the interests of the United States.

Accordingly, we request you provide a response to the following questions:

1. How does the expansion of NIVs to Cuban citizens serve America's interests given the concerns highlighted above?
2. How does expanding NIVs not benefit members of the Cuban regime when it provides more opportunities for fraud and abuse?
3. How will you ensure that individuals with connections to the regime are not issued NIVs? Please provide a detailed explanation of the vetting process.
4. How will intracompany transferees receive NIVs if U.S. private sector companies are prohibited in Cuba?
5. Has the U.S. government expanded NIVs to the other SSOTs—Iran, North Korea, and Syria? If not, does it plan to do so? Why or why not?

Sincerely,



Marco Rubio
U.S. Senator



Ted Cruz
U.S. Senator



Rick Scott
U.S. Senator