STATE OF ARKANSAS
ASA HUTCHINSON
GOVERNOR

November 3, 2015

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Minority Leader
United States House of Representatives
233 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Congresswoman Pelosi:

I have just returned from a three-day trade mission to Cuba, where I led a delegation of nearly twenty Arkansas companies who are interested in enhancing trade between our two countries, and more specifically, increasing the market for Arkansas products. During my three days on the ground, I experienced the exceptional hospitality of the Cuban people and met with senior Cuban government officials, who as you know, are eager to see the United States embargo against their government lifted.

In meetings with those officials and in various media events in Cuba and back home, I stressed the importance of both sides making changes that would gradually reduce the economic sanctions imposed on the Cuban government. President Obama has lessened the burden of the embargo on the Cuban citizens by making purposeful travel to Cuba easier for American citizens and by allowing Americans to increase their remittances to family in Cuba. For its part, the Cuban government has begun to license small private businesses, which has increased competition not just among similar businesses but with government-owned entities as well. All of the above has increased incomes for Cuban citizens and is leading to better economic outcomes for small business owners.

As Cuba recognizes benefits from eased restrictions, we must be able to similarly recognize benefits for Americans. In this area, Congress has an important role to play. The current cash-in-advance requirement limits a potential market of nearly $40 Million for Arkansas products alone. Allowing flexibility in credit extension is an important next step, and Congress can support enhanced livelihoods for Americans by moving the legislation cosponsored by Congressman Rick Crawford (H.R. 3687) and Senator John Boozman (S.1049), which provide financial flexibility to sell American commodities to Cuba.

As you know, while in Congress, I voted to maintain the embargo on Cuba, and my opinion of the importance of increasing the freedom of the Cuban people remains the same. However, I don't believe that lifting the embargo is an all-or-nothing matter.

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Congress, under your leadership, can undertake efforts that would benefit Americans while maintaining political pressure on a regime that has violated human rights for more than fifty years.

If I can provide further information about my trip or you have questions, please contact my Director of State-Federal Relations, Alison Williams, at 501.779.8089.

Sincerely,

Asa Hutchinson

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