

## STATE OF FLORIDA

**ASHLEY MOODY  
ATTORNEY GENERAL**

July 29, 2020

The Honorable James E. Risch  
Chairman, Senate Foreign Relations Committee  
483 Russell Senate Office Building  
United States Senate  
Washington D.C. 20510

The Honorable Bob Menendez  
Ranking Member, Senate Foreign Relations Committee  
528 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington D.C. 20510

The Honorable Marco Rubio  
284 Russell Senate Office Building  
Washington D.C. 20510

The Honorable Rick Scott  
716 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington D.C. 20510

The Honorable Lindsey Graham  
290 Russell Senate Office Building  
Washington D.C. 20510

The Honorable Ted Cruz  
127A Russell Senate Office Building  
Washington D.C. 20510

Dear Senators Risch, Menendez, Rubio, Scott, Graham and Cruz:

I write to express my strong support for Senate Bill S.3977, the “Cut Profits to the Cuban Regime Act of 2020.”

As the Attorney General of Florida, combatting human trafficking is one of my highest priorities. I currently serve as the Chair of Florida's Statewide Council on Human Trafficking, which includes law enforcement officers, prosecutors, legislators and subject matter experts from across our State. I also serve as the Co-Chair of the Human Trafficking Committee of the National Association of Attorneys General. The Committee is a national bipartisan effort by the nation's Attorneys General to promote best practices aimed at prosecuting human trafficking at the local, state, national and international level.

Human trafficking takes many forms and its victims include people from all walks of life. Much of our law enforcement effort is aimed at sexual exploitation by human traffickers, but that is by no means the only form of human trafficking. Across the globe, people are forced to work for miniscule wages and sometimes no wages at all, in conditions ranging from the miserable to the downright lethal, while traffickers use that labor for their own gain. Sometimes their traffickers are not merely tolerated by governments, but are governments themselves. And those governmental traffickers are often aided and abetted by governments hosting the exploited workers. The trafficking of Cuba's healthcare professionals through its overseas medical missions program, at which Senate Bill S.3977 is aimed, is an instance of just such governmental trafficking.

The story of Cuba's abusive medical missions program is well known and well documented. The United States Department of State's annual Trafficking in Persons Report (the TIP Report), the most recent version of which was released just last month, provides telling details about Cuba's exploitation of its doctors and other medical personnel. The 2020 TIP report states at page 174:

The Government of Cuba does not fully meet the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking and is not making significant efforts to do so; therefore Cuba remained on Tier 3 [the Tier of highest concern to the State Department]. . . [D]uring the reporting period there was a government policy or government pattern to profit from labor export programs with strong indications of forced labor, particularly its foreign medical missions program. The government refused to improve the transparency of the program or address labor and trafficking concerns despite persistent allegations from observers, former participants, and foreign governments of Cuban officials' involvement in abuses. The government failed to inform participants of the terms of their contracts, which varied from country to country, confiscated their documents and salaries, and threatened participants and their family members if participants left the program.

Cuban medical personnel have been sent to over sixty countries, whose governments typically cooperate with the Cuban regime by sending the wages of medical personnel directly, or through intermediaries, to the Cuban government. Cuba in turn pays the medical personnel only a small fraction of the compensation agreed by the host government. An example is set out in a Federal civil action now pending in the United States District Court for the District of Columbia, styled *Matos Rodriguez et al. v. Pan American Health Organization et al.* It is alleged that the Pan American Health Organization (an affiliate of the World Health Organization) collected over \$75 million from the exploitation of Cuban medical personnel working in Brazil, by serving as the middleman between the Brazilian government and the Cuban government. That arrangement resulted in 85% of the medical workers' wages being funneled to the Cuban regime by Brazil, and the PAHO retaining a 5% "brokerage fee" for its role. The doctors and nurses are said to have received 10% or less of what the Brazilian government paid for their services. I have spoken with

the attorneys representing the plaintiffs and a victim now living in Florida, who have confirmed this arrangement.

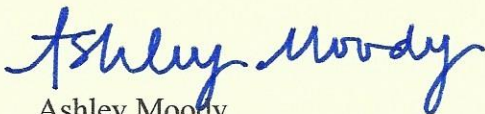
Cuba's exploitation of its medical professionals is one of the largest sources of revenue for the regime. That money not only props up Cuba's military and security apparatus, but also provides funding for Cuba's support for the Maduro regime in Venezuela, and its meddling in Nicaragua and other countries. Senate Bill S.3977 would provide a powerful incentive for host countries to pay medical personnel their wages directly, so that the Cuban regime cannot profit from the medical missions it organizes. It would help ensure that the process of sending Cuban medical personnel to countries overseas is transparent. And host governments would have an incentive to prevent the Cuban government from using tactics such as the seizure of passports, surveillance, and the separation of professionals from their families as leverage over its medical professionals overseas.

Cuba and its apologists will inevitably oppose these measures and claim that they interfere with Cuba's supposedly humanitarian missions in a time of COVID-19. But the protections of Senate Bill S.3977 are all the more vital in an era when a deadly pandemic is sweeping the globe, and Cuba is putting its medical professionals at great risk of their own health and safety as they treat COVID-19 patients in distant countries. These dedicated professionals should not be subjected to unacceptable economic exploitation – backed up with threats to their livelihoods and to their families – while they are being exposed to a potentially lethal disease.

I fully support Senate Bill S.3977. This law will make host governments accountable for their actions in cooperating with Cuba's unacceptable treatment of medical professionals sent overseas to earn money for the regime. This issue is of particular importance to Floridians, because thousands of Cuban medical professionals who have been subjected to this abuse have been granted permission to reside in the United States, with a large percentage of those residing in Florida. These brave survivors were able to escape exploitation by the Cuban regime and have found safety in America, especially in Florida.

I respectfully urge both houses of Congress to take up Senate Bill S.3977 and to enact a law that will ensure that justice will prevail, and that this pernicious form of governmental human trafficking will come to an end.

Sincerely,



Ashley Moody  
Florida Attorney General