

BY: Senator JACKSON

URGING the New York State Congressional delegation to support H.R. 2404, lifting the trade embargo on Cuba, and end the Cuban travel ban

WHEREAS, H.R. 2404, The United States-Cuba Relations Normalization Act is meant to normalize relations with the Republic of Cuba by lifting the trade embargo and remove restrictions on commerce and travel; and

WHEREAS, Currently, the United States imposes a commercial, economic, and financial embargo against Cuba; and

WHEREAS, On April 13, 2009, President Barack Obama eased the travel ban, allowing Cuban-Americans to travel freely to Cuba; on January 14, 2011, he further eased the ban, by allowing students and religious missionaries to travel to Cuban if they meet certain restrictions; and

WHEREAS, On December 17, 2014, to reestablish diplomatic relations and to loosen travel an economic policy, Cuba released Alan Gross, an American prisoner, on humanitarian grounds and exchanged an unnamed American spy for the three remaining members for the Cuban Five; and

WHEREAS, President Obama also announced a review of Cuba's status and asked Congress to remove the embargo entirely; Cuba agreed to release 53 political prisoners and to allow Red Cross and UN human-rights investigators access; on May 29, 2015, according to the U.S State Department, "Cuba's designation as a state sponsor of terrorism was rescinded"; and

WHEREAS, In September of 2016, Newsweek reported future President Donald Trump's hotel company violated the embargo, spending a minimum of \$68,000 for its 1998 foray into Cuba without U.S Government approval; with his knowledge, executives funneled the cash for the Cuba trip through an American consulting firm called Seven Arrows investment and Development Corp; and

WHEREAS, Once the business consultants traveled to Cuba and incurred the expenses for the venture, Seven Arrows instructed senior officers with Donald Trump's company-then called Trump Hotels & Casino Resorts, how to make it appear legal by linking it after the fact to a charitable effort; and

WHEREAS, During the 2016 presidential race, then candidate Donald Trump argued he would have done a better job negotiating the restoration of relations with Cuban than President Barack Obama, but he said that he essentially agreed with the new policy; and

WHEREAS, Previously, Donald Trump had tried to open hotels in Cuba and did not seem opposed to dealing with the Cuban government; Donald Trump reversed course and promised that the state's conservative Cuban exile population that he would overturn President Obama's decisions; and

WHEREAS, In June of 2019, President Trump rescinded the Obama administration's recently enacted Cuban-American cultural trade and travel freedoms of 2016 by imposing new restrictions on Americans traveling to Cuba that no longer permitted group educational or cultural visits known as "people to people" trips unless they were booked before June 5, 2019; and

WHEREAS, The new travel restrictions preclude major cruise ships, private yachts or fishing vessels, as well as major airlines from stopping in Cuba unless individuals can prove they are traveling "under the support for Cuban people" category and can present proof of an itinerary with meetings and visits with local business owners or evidence of participation in local activities that include staying in a private home rather than a hotel; and

WHEREAS, While Travel restrictions for Cuban-Americans visiting relatives in Cuba remain unchanged and are limited to no more than three visits per year, tighter restrictions have been imposed on the number of allowable financial remittances to family members, and are now capped at \$1000 per person every three months compared to the unlimited remittances allowed under the Obama administration; and

WHEREAS, A Cuban Foreign Minister reposted that in recent months Washington has escalated aggression by preventing international fuel shipments to the Island, scaling down consular services, and attacking national programs that support other developing countries; the blockade has caused incalculable humanitarian damages; and

WHEREAS, In November of 2019, a United Nations General Assembly has adopted a resolution calling for an end to economic commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States against Cuba; national representatives said that the nearly six decades long blockade imposed on the Caribbean island by Washington impeded its right to development and its ability to participate fully in the global economy; they urged the U.S. to heed the Assembly's repeated call to lift its restrictive policies; and

WHEREAS, Furthermore, the United Nations confirmed the Cuban embargo is opposed by a majority of the nations in the world as well as a majority of the people in the United States; and

WHEREAS, The United States can best support democratic change and human rights in Cuba through bi-lateral dialogue with the Cuban government and by promoting trade and commerce, travel, communications, and cultural, academic, and scientific exchanges; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That this Legislative Body pause in its deliberations to urge the New York State Congressional delegation to support H.R. 2404, lifting the trade embargo on Cuba, and end the Cuban travel ban; and be it further

RESOLVED, That a copy of this Resolution, suitably engrossed, be

transmitted to the New York State Congressional delegation.