

RESOLUTION NO. NS-29,744

RESOLUTION OF THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF SANTA CRUZ PROMOTING MEDICAL AND SCIENTIFIC COLLABORATION BETWEEN THE CITY OF SANTA CRUZ AND CUBA TO ADDRESS THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC AND URGING THE UNITED STATES CONGRESS TO REMOVE RESTRICTIONS ON COLLABORATION BY SUSPENDING ECONOMIC AND TRAVEL SANCTIONS AGAINST CUBA

WHEREAS, the United States has the highest number of COVID-19 cases and deaths in the world – 6.35 million infected and deaths exceeding 190,000; and

WHEREAS, US deaths fall disproportionately on Black and Latinx communities and on elders, noting that although Detroit has only six percent of Cuba's population, Detroit residents have suffered 18 times more deaths than Cubans; and

WHEREAS, in the face of this worldwide menace, now is the time for international cooperation and solidarity; and

WHEREAS, the country of Cuba has a long history of providing international medical aid to other countries with many of its medical personnel directly involved in the fight against COVID-19 as members of the specially trained Henry Reeve International Medical Brigade against Disasters and Serious Epidemics; and

WHEREAS, the Medical Brigade distinguished itself in the fight against the Ebola epidemic in West Africa and stepped forward to assist in many epidemics around the world, including dengue fever, HIV, swine flu, and hepatitis; and

WHEREAS, fifty countries have requested aid from the brigade, with over 2,000 Cuban health workers currently serving in the battle against COVID-19 in more than 28 countries; and

WHEREAS, Cuba offers treatment regimens for patients and prevention protocols for health workers including its drug Interferon Alpha 2B Recombinant, now in standard use in China and Cuba; and

WHEREAS, although more than 42 countries have expressed an interest in acquiring this pharmaceutical, the medication is not available in the United States due to increased restrictions against collaboration with Cuba; and

WHEREAS, worldwide, some 80% of COVID-19 patients in critical condition are dying, in contrast to Cuba, where 80% in critical and serious condition are now being saved; and

WHEREAS, the recent reduction in deaths of severely ill COVID-19 patients in Cuba is largely attributed to two treatments that were implemented in April, 2020 and appear to help calm the "cytokine storm," a dangerous overresponse by the immune system; and

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WHEREAS, there are precedents for collaborative initiatives between Cuba and other US cities and states, as demonstrated by the City and County of San Francisco, City of Richmond, California and the City of Berkeley, which all unanimously passed resolutions supporting medical collaboration, as well as the Minnesota Legislature which has introduced a similar measure; and

WHEREAS, there have also been multi-year joint ventures between Cuba's Center for Molecular Immunology and Buffalo's Roswell Park Comprehensive Cancer Center in developing CIMAvax, the Cuban lung cancer vaccine, as well as a collaboration between medical personnel from Cuba and the University of Illinois on infant mortality in Chicago; and

WHEREAS, in 2015 the World Health Organization recognized Cuba's medical system as a worldwide leader in biotechnology, and Cuba has made significant contributions to the international medical field, including a drug that prevents 77% of diabetic amputations; and

WHEREAS, the US blockade of Cuba has severely restricted collaboration on scientific and medical research; and

WHEREAS, the people of Santa Cruz and the world would benefit from Cuban biotechnical, medical, and public health expertise in combating the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic; therefore,

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Santa Cruz City Council supports the lifting of restrictions on the Cuban COVID-19 treatment Interferon Alfa 2b, opening a path for it to enter clinical trials; and,

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Santa Cruz City Council urges the U.S. Congress and the President to lift restrictions on access to Cuban medical expertise in order to more effectively combat the COVID-19 pandemic by suspending US economic and travel sanctions against Cuba; and,

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Santa Cruz City Council calls on the federal government to cease ongoing measures that deter Cuba from importing medical equipment and medicines to confront COVID-19, and cease attempts to stop other countries from accepting Cuban medical brigades and assistance; and,

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Santa Cruz City Council encourages the County of Santa Cruz Board of Supervisors to explore adopting a similar resolution of support.

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PASSED AND ADOPTED this 10th day of November, 2020, by the following vote:

AYES: Councilmembers Beiers, Brown, Golder, Watkins; Mayor Cummings.

NOES: Councilmember Mathews; Vice Mayor Meyers.

ABSENT: None.

DISQUALIFIED: None.

APPROVED:


Justin Cummings, Mayor

ATTEST:


Bonnie Bush, City Clerk Administrator