

OPEN LETTER TO GOVERNOR GAVIN NEWSOM
Appeal for Immediate Action to Initiate California-Cuba Medical Collaboration

Once again, California is outpacing all other states in the surge of COVID-19 cases. California is desperately searching for nurses, doctors and other medical staff, perhaps from as far away as Australia, as the coronavirus surge pushes hospitals to the breaking point.

Why are we looking across the globe when Cuba is successfully combatting COVID-19? Cuba is a world leader in preventing, containing, and treating the coronavirus pandemic. Cuba's experience in battling epidemics (Ebola, H1N1) and natural disasters (hurricanes, tsunamis) provides the necessary expertise to contain the virus. Cuba has helped fight this pandemic in thirty-nine countries from Italy to South Africa to the Caribbean. Despite sending medical teams around the world, including in COVID-19 hot spots such as Lombardy, Italy, not a single member of a Cuban medical team has died from COVID-19.

Cuba, a nation of 11.3 million people, has 10,500 COVID-19 infections, and 139 deaths due to COVID-19. In sharp contrast, Los Angeles County alone, with a population of 10 million, has 664,000 COVID-19 infections, and 9153 deaths. (12/23/20) This virus disproportionately hits hardest the poor and working classes, Black and Brown, and Indigenous communities. People continue to needlessly suffer and die without international collaboration.

Medical/biotech collaboration with Cuba is not without precedent. Four years ago, the US and Cuba signed a MOU for medical collaboration, which paved the way for a lung cancer drug developed by the Biotech Institute in Cuba and is going through clinical trials at the Roswell Park Comprehensive Cancer Center in New York. Most recently, collaboration with Cuban medical professionals helped to save the life of a noted Cuban American pianist in Minnesota. On December 16, 2020, the University of Minnesota initiated a collaboration on COVID-19 treatment by holding a virtual forum with leading Cuban health experts.

In the last six months cities and labor councils throughout the country, including Sacramento, San Francisco, Oakland, Berkeley, Richmond and Santa Cruz, have called for medical and scientific collaboration with Cuba to fight COVID-19.

<http://www.buildingrelationswithcubanlabor.org/2020-resolutions-on-cuba>

The economic blockade prevents us from freely collaborating with Cuba. After 60 years let's end it for the good of all. It is time for the US to recognize the need for scientific and medical collaboration if we are to eradicate or contain the pandemic. California has been a leader in medical, social and political advances. **We urge California to step up and become a leader in the battle and containment of COVID-19.**

Resolutions Committee, Saving Lives Campaign <http://savinglives.us-cubanormalization.org/>
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