A resolution

urging increased action to address the COVID-19 pandemic and save lives in Minnesota
by entering into medical and scientific collaboration with the nation of Cuba;
memorializing Congress and the President of the United States to remove restrictions
on collaboration.

WHEREAS, although COVID-19 cases and fatalities in the United States have declined
recently, the pandemic is far from over, with many experts warning that a fourth wave may be
imminent in the next months in view of the aggressive nature of the B.1.1.7 variant and other
variants that are already spreading in the United States; and

WHEREAS, the United States has lagged behind other countries in critical medical research
that would have addressed the pandemic, such as its failure to engage in robust genomic sequencing,
leaving the United States particularly vulnerable to new variants, with the United States in February
2021 ranked 36th in the world in sequencing; and

WHEREAS, it has been estimated that vaccine nationalism could cost rich nations trillions
of dollars, and the United States $16,000,000,000 if it fails to collaborate with other nations, because
no one is safe until everyone is safe; and

WHEREAS, United Nations Secretary General Antonio Guterres has warned against vaccine
nationalism because the virus easily crosses borders from poor nations to wealthier ones like the
United States and it is in the national interest of the United States to collaborate with other countries;
and

WHEREAS, as of February 19, 2021, the United States had experienced the highest number
of COVID-19 cases and deaths in the world, with approximately 29,000,000 cases and 507,000
deaths, while Cuba had experienced approximately 43,000 cases and 287 deaths; and

WHEREAS, as of February 19, 2021, the United States had experienced 1,527 deaths per
one million people from COVID-19 while Cuba had 25 deaths per one million people; and
WHEREAS, as of February 19, 2021, with approximately twice the population of Minnesota, Cuba had experienced only 287 deaths from COVID-19 compared to Minnesota's 6,480; and

WHEREAS, Black, Latinx, and Indigenous communities in the United States are about four times more likely than white people to be hospitalized due to COVID-19 and are dying from the disease in disproportionate numbers; and

WHEREAS, life expectancy in the United States has decreased by 1.13 years since the pandemic began, and is estimated to have decreased by 2.10 years among Black people and 3.05 years among Latinos, while Native Americans continue to have the lowest life expectancy of all groups; and

WHEREAS, the United States still faces many challenges ahead regarding what are termed "long haulers" who present varying and continuing symptoms with no consistent explanation; and

WHEREAS, Cuba offers treatment regimens for patients and prevention protocols for health workers, including clinical trials of Interferon Alpha 2B Recombinant, now in standard use in China and Cuba, and more than 45 countries have expressed an interest in acquiring this pharmaceutical to include in their treatments in some of the worst cases of COVID-19; and

WHEREAS, Interferon Alpha 2B Recombinant, as well as other innovative Cuban pharmaceuticals used to treat lung cancer and diabetes, are not available in the United States because of the 60-year-old United States embargo against Cuba; and

WHEREAS, the United States embargo has severely restricted collaboration on scientific and medical research that interferes with the potential of saving lives in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic; and

WHEREAS, despite the punishing and deadly United States embargo, Cuba has achieved health and medical achievements that are unparalleled even in wealthy nations and, as such, is in a position to offer medical assistance internationally; and

WHEREAS, in 2015, the World Health Organization recognized Cuba's medical system as a worldwide leader in biotechnology; and

WHEREAS, Minnesota is home to many prestigious medical institutions, organizations, and businesses and is in a position to provide leadership to the rest of the country in medical research, treatment, and cooperation; and

WHEREAS, despite the United States embargo, there is precedent for medical collaboration between Cuba and the United States; and

WHEREAS, on December 16, 2020, in a meeting designed to share Cuba's experiences working on the front lines against COVID-19, top officials of the Cuban Ministry of Health met with leaders of the University of Minnesota Medical School, School of Nursing, and School of
Public Health, along with the participation of Dr. Michael Osterholm, University of Minnesota President Joan Gabel, and Senator Amy Klobuchar; and

WHEREAS, there have 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 maternal and infant health; and

WHEREAS, on June 13, 2016, the United States Department of Health and Human Services and the Cuban Ministry of Public Health signed a Memorandum of Understanding that is still in force and allows collaboration on a range of public health issues, including global health security, research and development, and technology; and

WHEREAS, as of February 19, 2021, Cuba is the only country in Latin America that is working on a COVID-19 vaccine and, with four vaccines in development, may be on the brink of mass producing sufficient supplies to begin offering them to visitors to the island and still conclude 2021 with most of its population vaccinated; and

WHEREAS, Cuba has a long history of providing international medical aid and health care to the international community, especially in developing countries, and in 2005 offered the assistance of 1,100 doctors to immediately deploy to New Orleans in the wake of Hurricane Katrina; and

WHEREAS, the organization that provides such assistance, Cuba's Henry Reeve International Medical Brigade, was decisive in the fight against the Ebola epidemic in West Africa and has stepped forward in many epidemics around the world, including dengue fever, HIV/AIDS, swine flu, and hepatitis and now, COVID-19; and

WHEREAS, the Henry Reeve Brigade has been nominated for the 2021 Nobel Peace Prize by at least 36,000 prominent individuals and organizations including parliamentarians, medical professionals, academics, and others; and

WHEREAS, Cuba currently has medical brigades of about 37,000 health workers equipped with Cuban pharmaceuticals in 67 countries assisting in fighting the pandemic and other diseases; and

WHEREAS, the Minnesota Legislature previously urged collaboration with Cuba and removal of the United States embargo when, in 2008, it passed and sent to Governor Tim Pawlenty a resolution advocating the end of trade and financial and travel restrictions on Cuba; and

WHEREAS, legislation urging medical collaboration with Cuba was introduced in both houses of the Minnesota Legislature at the end of the 91st Session; and

WHEREAS, both St. Paul and Minneapolis have adopted resolutions urging collaboration with Cuba and an end to the United States embargo; and
WHEREAS, since the outbreak of the pandemic, the cities of Berkeley, Oakland, Richmond, Sacramento, San Francisco, and Santa Cruz, California; Cambridge, Massachusetts; Chicago, Illinois; Cleveland, Ohio; Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania; and Seattle, Washington, as well as at least seven labor councils and the Milwaukee, Wisconsin, Board of School Directors, have passed resolutions urging medical and other collaboration with Cuba; and

WHEREAS, now is the time to call for international cooperation and solidarity in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic; and

WHEREAS, the people of Minnesota and its underserved communities would benefit from the medical expertise and advancement in Cuba, as have many countries around the world; NOW, THEREFORE,

BE IT RESOLVED by the Legislature of the State of Minnesota that it calls on Governor Tim Walz to direct the Department of Health and other agencies, as appropriate, to further investigate the potential for collaborating with Cuba to obtain crucial assistance and expertise for Minnesota residents and, in particular, its underserved Black, Latinx, and Indigenous communities.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Legislature of the State of Minnesota calls on the United States Congress and the President of the United States to lift restrictions on access to Cuban medical expertise in order to more effectively combat the COVID-19 pandemic.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Secretary of State of the State of Minnesota is directed to prepare copies of this memorial and transmit them to the President of the United States, the President and the Secretary of the United States Senate, the Speaker and the Clerk of the United States House of Representatives, and Minnesota's Senators and Representatives in Congress.