

Committees:

Armed Services and Veterans Affairs
Committee
Economic and Workforce Development
Committee
Behavioral Health & Recovery Supports
Committee



Contact Information:

Office: 614-466-8550
Email: rep52@ohiohouse.gov
77 S. High Street 13th Floor, Columbus,
Ohio 43215-6111

**Representative Jennifer Gross
The Ohio House of Representatives**

HR 103 – Rep. Jennifer Gross, Sponsor Testimony, Wednesday, December 8th, 2021

Chairman Wilkin, Vice Chair White, Ranking Member Sweeney, and members of the Ohio Government Oversight Committee, thank you for allowing me to provide sponsor testimony for HR 103; a resolution standing in solidarity with the Cuban people.

This Resolution came to be because a constituent of mine shared his personal story with me at a town hall. This constituent shared that had he still been in Cuba, our meeting would have been considered against the law. He asked that I stand in solidarity with the Cuban people as he is Cuban American with family still in Havana, struggling. And, according to data from Central Ohio Diversity, there are roughly 7,600 Cuban Americans living in Ohio.¹

So, HR 103 is a resolution that expresses the importance of standing with the Cuban people in their demands for freedom and urges other democracies and regional and multilateral organizations to affirm that violence against the unarmed people of Cuba will not be tolerated.

Freedom House rates Cuba as "Not Free" in both of its 2021 reports "Freedom in the World" and "Freedom on the Net," and further summarizes that, "Cuba is a one-party communist state that outlaws political pluralism, suppresses dissent, and severely restricts basic civil liberties."²

The United States Department of State's 2020 Country Report on Human Rights Practices in Cuba states, "Significant human rights issues included: unlawful or arbitrary killings, including extrajudicial killings, by the government; forced disappearance by the government; torture and cruel, inhumane, and degrading treatment of political dissidents, detainees, and prisoners by security forces; harsh and life-threatening prison conditions; arbitrary arrests and detentions; political prisoners; significant problems with the independence of the judiciary; and arbitrary or unlawful interference with privacy."³

¹ <https://www.centralohiodiversity.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/Ohio-Hispanic-Americans-info-packet-State-of-Ohio.pdf>

² <https://freedomhouse.org/country/cuba/freedom-world/2021>

³ <https://www.state.gov/reports/2020-country-reports-on-human-rights-practices/cuba/>

Since Fidel Castro illegitimately and violently seized power, hundreds of thousands of Cuban nationals have fled communist oppression; the House of Representatives of the State of Ohio shall call for the release of all political prisoners and for the end of acts of repression and other human rights abuses against the Cuban people.

This resolution honors the courageous Cuban people for standing up to the Cuban regime and demanding respect for fundamental freedoms, such as freedom of expression and assembly. This resolution also recognizes the brave pro-democracy and human rights activists who have been persecuted throughout decades of communist tyranny.

According to our Ohio Constitution, in Article 1 Section 1, it states, "All men, are, by nature, free and independent, and have certain inalienable rights, among which are those of enjoying and defending life and liberty, acquiring, possessing, and protecting property, and seeking and obtaining happiness and safety."

This resolution is relevant due to the Cuban Americans we have here in Ohio, and those that wish they could live in Ohio. In fact, eight percent of my district is Cuban American. This resolution shows that we, as Ohioans, stand with the people of Cuba and their fight for freedom and a new life. Just last month the Cuban regime censored its people from a peaceful pro-democracy civilian protest.⁴ Their fight to end decades of Communist rule is not in vain. Please see Senator Marco Rubio's Press Conference for more information.⁵

Thank you once again for this opportunity to provide sponsor testimony on HR 103. I am more than happy to answer any questions.

⁴ https://www.wsj.com/articles/cubas-government-deploys-security-forces-to-prevent-protest-11637008806?mod=Searchresults_pos8&page=1

⁵ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LdaqYrsD6rw>