WHEREAS, Cuba relies on imports for 75 percent of its food, creating a huge potential market for U.S. farmers and ranchers; and

WHEREAS, U.S. producers have been able to take advantage of some of that demand with the passage of a 2000 law allowing limited trade with Cuba, in spite of a trade, travel and economic embargo that has been in place since 1962; and

WHEREAS, the Midwest stands to benefit from the market opportunities that greater trade with Cuba would provide; according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, total agricultural exports to Cuba from the U.S. since 2001 had reached $4 billion as of December 2012, and if current trade restrictions are removed, each Midwestern state could average between $60 million and $150 million annually in trade; and

WHEREAS, the U.S. trade, financial and travel restrictions against Cuba hinder the export of the Midwest’s agricultural and food products; now therefore be it

RESOLVED, that the Midwestern Legislative Conference supports efforts to remove trade, financial and travel restrictions to Cuba; and be it further

RESOLVED, that this resolution be submitted to appropriate state and federal officials.