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State of Minnesota

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

NINETY-FIRST SESSION

H. F. No. 4690

05/16/2020 Authored by Lesch The bill was read for the first time and referred to the Committee on Rules and Legislative Administration

1.1 A resolution

1.2 urging further action to address the COVID-19 pandemic and save lives in Minnesota

1.3 by entering into medical and scientific collaboration with the country of Cuba;

1.4 memorializing Congress to remove restrictions on collaboration.

1.5 WHEREAS, the COVID-19 virus has created a worldwide pandemic that calls for international

1.6 cooperation to defeat it; and

1.7 WHEREAS, the people of Minnesota and the United States remain at risk from the infectious

1.8 disease; the country's death rate from the virus ranks among the highest in the world and a united,

1.9 cooperative, and engaged response by the executive, legislative, and judicial branches of government

1.10 is required to address the disaster; and

1.11 WHEREAS, in House Concurrent Resolution No. 6 the House of Representatives encouraged

1.12 Governor Tim Walz to continue to exercise all tools available under law to keep Minnesotans

1.13 healthy, safe, and secure for the duration of the outbreak; and

1.14 WHEREAS, Minnesota is home to many prestigious medical institutions, organizations, and

1.15 businesses, and is in a position to provide leadership to the rest of the country in medical research,

1.16 treatment, and cooperation; and

1.17 WHEREAS, the country of Cuba has a long history of medical aid to other countries and

1.18 many of its medical personnel are now intimately involved in the fight against COVID-19 as part

1.19 of the specially trained Henry Reeve International Medical Brigade against Disasters and Serious

1.20 Epidemics, which distinguished itself in the fight against the Ebola epidemic in West Africa and

1.21 has assisted with other epidemics around the world including dengue fever, HIV, swine flu, and

1.22 hepatitis; 50 countries have requested aid from the brigade; and

1.23 WHEREAS, Cuba offers treatment regimens that use its drug Interferon Alpha-2B

1.24 Recombinant, which has not been approved for use in the United States due to increased restrictions

1.25 against collaboration with Cuba; and

2.1 WHEREAS, regimens using Interferon Alpha-2B Recombinant are now being employed in
2.2 both Cuba and China as standard COVID-19 treatment protocol; and

2.3 WHEREAS, reports point to the efficacy of Interferon Alpha-2B Recombinant, when combined
2.4 with other drugs, in treating COVID-19; it has been called a possible wonder drug against the virus
2.5 in the Yale University Press Blog; and

2.6 WHEREAS, in an extensive medical handbook on how to treat COVID-19 that was recently
2.7 published by Zhejiang University School of Medicine, Interferon Alpha-2B Recombinant is a
2.8 crucial component of the anti-viral treatment to combat the coronavirus and is also used as a
2.9 preventative measure to protect health care workers from contagion; and

2.10 WHEREAS, more than 80 countries have shown interest in acquiring Cuba's Interferon
2.11 Alpha-2B Recombinant, demonstrating trust in the therapy's success in confronting the pandemic;
2.12 and

2.13 WHEREAS, many medical professionals, including Dr. Michael Osterholm, Director of the
2.14 Center for Infectious Disease Research and Policy at the University of Minnesota, have signed a
2.15 statement calling for medical, clinical, and scientific collaboration with Cuba and incorporating
2.16 Cuba's Interferon Alpha-2B Recombinant in clinical trials; and

2.17 WHEREAS, there is precedent for medical collaboration between Minnesota institutions and
2.18 Cuba in the 2016 Memorandum of Understanding between the Province of Santa Clara, Cuba, and
2.19 the Minnesota Association of Public Health; and

2.20 WHEREAS, there is further precedent for similar collaborative initiatives in other states, as
2.21 demonstrated by the joint venture between Cuba's Center for Molecular Immunology and Buffalo's
2.22 Roswell Park comprehensive Cancer Center in developing CIMAvax, the Cuban lung cancer
2.23 vaccine, and the collaboration between medical personnel from Cuba and the University of Illinois
2.24 on infant mortality in Chicago; and

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

2.27 WHEREAS, the U.S. embargo of Cuba has severely restricted collaboration on scientific
2.28 and medical research; and

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

2.31 BE IT RESOLVED by the Legislature of the State of Minnesota that it calls on Governor
2.32 Tim Walz to direct the Department of Health and other agencies, as appropriate, to investigate the
2.33 potential for collaborating with Cuba to obtain crucial assistance and expertise for Minnesota
2.34 residents in the midst of the pandemic; and

3.1 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Legislature of the State of Minnesota calls on the
3.2 Congress of the United States and the President of the United States to lift restrictions on access to
3.3 Cuban medical expertise, including the importation of Interferon Alpha-2B Recombinant, in order
3.4 to more effectively combat the COVID-19 pandemic; and

3.5 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Legislature of the State of Minnesota calls on other
3.6 states to join in this action by passing the same or similar resolutions; and

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