Honorable Ben Cardin February 2,2024

509 Hart Senate Building Washington DC 20510 Dear Senator Cardin:

As a member of the Nicaraguan Solidarity Coalition, I am deeply concerned about Senate Bill 1881, “Restoring Sovereignty and Human Rights in Nicaragua Act of 2023” which is under consideration right now in the Senate Foreign Affairs Committee. (Optional: Identify yourself as a constituent if you are, and/or tell any specific personal connection with NIcaragua or with US foreign relations) .

Senate Bill 1881 could do tremendous harm to ordinary Nicaraguan citizens and should not go forward in any form.

There are ample data on the negative humanitarian impacts of unilateral coercive measures, also known as sanctions. The United Nations Office of the High Commissioner on Human Rights has done numerous studies that find that sanctions violate international law and the UN Charter and have a negative impact on the enjoyment of human rights.1 In April of 2023 the UN Human Rights Council adopted a resolution condemning the “disproportionate and indiscriminate human costs of unilateral sanctions,” which impinge on such basic rights as the right to life, access to health care, freedom from hunger, and the right to an adequate standard of living, food, education, work, and housing.2 The Center for Economic and Policy Research not only found that US sanctions caused over 40,000 excess deaths in just one year in Venezuela, it also finds overwhelming evidence that sanctions everywhere severely harm innocent people.3 And the Sanctions Kill Campaign rightly calls the imposition of unilateral coercive measures a form of economic war that kills people and causes tremendous suffering and deprivation to the most vulnerable citizens—the elderly, the poor, children, and the sick.4

US-imposed sanctions have already violated Nicaragua’s right to development by drastically curtailing its access to loans from international financial institutions. As Finance Minister Ivan Acosta stated in a recent interview,5 Nicaragua was on track to receive some $2.5-3.0 billion in development funding from these banks from 2018-2023, but because of the NICA Act received only 10% of that. One of the main purposes of such funding is the robust campaign to improve Nicaragua’s hospital and health infrastructure. We are ashamed that our wealthy country, with over $70,000 GDP per capita, is imposing such punishment on the Nicaraguan people who earn only $2,500 per capita, denying them the right to have the best possible health care system they desire. I find such collective punishment to be reprehensible.

1 <https://www.ohchr.org/en/special-procedures/sr-unilateral-coercive-measures>

2

[https://peoplesdispatch.org/2023/04/04/un-human-rights-council-condemns-impact-of-unilateral-sanctions-on-hu](https://peoplesdispatch.org/2023/04/04/un-human-rights-council-condemns-impact-of-unilateral-sanctions-on-human-rights/) [man-rights/](https://peoplesdispatch.org/2023/04/04/un-human-rights-council-condemns-impact-of-unilateral-sanctions-on-human-rights/)

3 <https://cepr.net/wp-content/uploads/2009/08/Sanctions_FactSheet.pdf>

4 <https://sanctionskill.org/>

5

[https://covertactionmagazine.com/2023/12/06/nicaraguas-finance-minister-details-how-u-s-sanctions-impact-nica](https://covertactionmagazine.com/2023/12/06/nicaraguas-finance-minister-details-how-u-s-sanctions-impact-nicaraguas-poor/) [raguas-poor/](https://covertactionmagazine.com/2023/12/06/nicaraguas-finance-minister-details-how-u-s-sanctions-impact-nicaraguas-poor/)

But the punishments proposed by S.1881 would be even worse. Blanket sanctions on broad sectors—such as gold and beef, in addition to the existing ones on coffee and sugar—could be devastating to the economy and lead to dramatically increased poverty and instability.

And the bill’s proposals to eject Nicaragua from the Central American Bank for Economic Integration (CABEI) and the Dominican Republic-Central America Free Trade Agreement (DR-CAFTA) could only be implemented by violating those agreements. This would also impinge on the sovereignty of Nicaragua AND its neighbors, destabilize the region, and exacerbate the migration crisis, as documented by Juan Gonzalez in an extensive report linking sanctions to increased migration.6 Honduras, with its new and struggling government, would be especially affected because it, along with Costa Rica, is one of the countries to which Nicaraguans flee in times of destabilization or crisis. And Nicaragua is a net exporter of food to its Central American neighbors; thus, instability in Nicaragua could cause food shortages elsewhere.

We also note that Nicaragua has the lowest homicide rate in Central America and one of the lowest in all the Americas.7 But instability caused by sanctions would likely increase crime. Indeed, the fallout of sanctions on Nicaragua could spill over to the entire region.

A letter by 21 Members of the U.S. House of Representatives states: “broad based US sanctions are a critical contributing factor in the current increase in migration… in light of their grave humanitarian toll on the peoples of those countries.”8 According to testimony from a Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission hearing on sanctions, broad-based economic sanctions immiserate civilian populations, rarely achieve their stated political goals of promoting democracy and human rights, and regularly backfire.9

In your efforts to strengthen US relations with the countries in our hemisphere and to seek to strengthen economic integration and development and to find solutions to mitigate the problems fueling emigration from Latin America, we implore you to withdraw your support for S.1881. Do not impose collective punishment on the average citizens of Nicaragua in our names. Instead, please respect the welfare of the Nicaraguan people and their right to choose their own form of government; attempts at regime change through coercive economic measures have a disastrous track record and inflict harm, causing the most vulnerable citizens to suffer.

We trust that you will take these concerns to heart and oppose S.1881. Sincerely,

Helen Duffy

Nicaraguan Solidarity Committee, <https://nicasolidarity.net/>

6 Juan González, The Current Migrant Crisis: How U.S. Policy toward Latin America has Fueled Historic Numbers of Asylum Seekers (Chicago: Great Cities Institute, 2023).

[https://greatcities.uic.edu/2023/10/20/the-current-migrant-crisis-how-u-s-policy-toward-latin-america-has-fueled-](https://greatcities.uic.edu/2023/10/20/the-current-migrant-crisis-how-u-s-policy-toward-latin-america-has-fueled-historic-numbers-of-asylum-seekers/) [historic-numbers-of-asylum-seekers/](https://greatcities.uic.edu/2023/10/20/the-current-migrant-crisis-how-u-s-policy-toward-latin-america-has-fueled-historic-numbers-of-asylum-seekers/)

7 <https://www.statista.com/statistics/947781/homicide-rates-latin-america-caribbean-country/>

8 [https://escobar.house.gov/uploadedfiles/final\_letter\_migration\_and\_cuba venzuela\_sanctions.pdf](https://escobar.house.gov/uploadedfiles/final_letter_migration_and_cuba__venzuela_sanctions.pdf)

9 <https://humanrightscommission.house.gov/events/hearings/considerations-economic-sanctions>