

2011 SESSION

ENROLLED

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 452

Commending the Operation Pedro Pan Exodus on the occasion of its 50th anniversary.

Agreed to by the Senate, February 17, 2011
Agreed to by the House of Delegates, February 22, 2011

WHEREAS, the year 2010 marked the 50th anniversary of the Operation Pedro Pan Exodus, which occurred when Cuban parents wanted an opportunity to send their children to the United States; and

WHEREAS, the Operation Pedro Pan Exodus began in November 1960 in Miami, when a 15-year-old boy named Pedro was brought to Father Bryan O. Walsh, director of the Catholic Welfare Bureau; and

WHEREAS, Pedro had come to Miami from Cuba to live with relatives, but they were impoverished and unable to provide for him; Father Walsh realized that many more youth faced the same situation and he contacted Tracy Voorhees, who had been sent by President Eisenhower to assess the needs of Cuban refugees in Miami; and

WHEREAS, Tracy Voorhees recommended to President Eisenhower that funds be made available to care for unaccompanied minors; meanwhile in Cuba, James Baker, the headmaster of Ruston Academy, an American school in Havana, was aiding a network of Cuban parents who wanted to provide their children with different educational opportunities; and

WHEREAS, the first children left in December of 1960 and after the break in diplomatic relations with Cuba on January 3, 1961, the United States Department of State authorized the Catholic Welfare Bureau to notify Cuban parents that visa requirements had been waived for their children, enabling children to travel by commercial flight to Miami; and

WHEREAS, from December 1960 to October 1962, more than 14,000 Cuban youths arrived in the United States; approximately 50 percent were met by family members at the airport while others stayed in licensed foster and group homes in over 100 cities in 35 states; and

WHEREAS, the exodus of the Cuban children was virtually unknown for over 30 years and today, the nonprofit organization Operation Pedro Pan Group, Inc., works to document and preserve the memory of this unique episode in history; and

WHEREAS, fifty years ago, thousands of Cuban parents made the bold and courageous decision to send their children to the United States in an effort to provide them with access to a better education and way of life; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the Senate, the House of Delegates concurring, That the General Assembly commend the Operation Pedro Pan Exodus on the occasion of its 50th anniversary; and, be it

RESOLVED FURTHER, That the Clerk of the Senate prepare a copy of this resolution for presentation to the Operation Pedro Pan Group, Inc., as an expression of the General Assembly's admiration and respect for those who dedicated themselves to the care of unaccompanied children and youth from Cuba.

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