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Washington 18 December 1860

My dear Sir

From common notoriety I assume the fact that the State of South Carolina is now deliberating on the question of seceding from the Union. Whilst any hope remains that this may be prevented, or even retarded so long as to afford the people of her sister States an opportunity to manifest their opinions upon the causes which have led to this proceeding, it is my duty to exert all the means in my power to avert so dread a catastrophe. I have therefore deemed it advisable to send to you the Hon. Caleb Cushing, in whose integrity – ability -& prudence I have full confidence, to hold communications with you on my behalf for the purpose of changing or modifying the contemplated action of the State in the manner I have already suggested.

Commending Mr. Cushing to your kind attention for his own sake, as well as that of the cause, I remain

Very respectfully  
Your friend  
James Buchanan

His Excellency  
Francis W. Pickens