



Benton Franklin Legal Aid **Society**

5219 W Clearwater Suite 5.
Kennewick WA 99336
Phone: (509) 221-1824
www.bflegalaid.org



May 9, 2022

Chair Dick Durbin
Committee on the Judiciary
224 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Ranking Member Chuck Grassley
Committee on the Judiciary
224 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chair Durbin and Ranking Member Grassley,

It is with the utmost enthusiasm that I write you to both personally and professionally support the nomination of Judge Salvador Mendoza to the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit. In my position as Director of Legal Aid for Benton and Franklin Counties in Washington, my directive is to pair citizens in need of help in civil cases who don't have the financial resources to hire appropriate legal support, with pro bono lawyers willing to help those in need. Judge Mendoza has always been, and continues to be, one of the biggest supporters of this type of program. He understands the value of a healthy judicial system where everyone is equally represented by quality professionals who understand the legal process, regardless of financial means. His career as a prosecutor, defense lawyer and judge is extensive, but throughout that time he has always been a strong supporter of equal justice for everyone. Not only has he worked with organizations like Benton Franklin Legal Aid as a pro bono attorney, but he also served on our Board of Directors for many years.

I first met Judge Mendoza in 2001, when I worked as the Domestic Case Manager for Benton and Franklin Counties. At that time, he was a criminal attorney, and considered one of the best in the area. He was always prepared in court, and highly sought after for his success and willingness to make sure his client was well represented. He approached me in 2006, in his capacity as president of the Board of Directors for Benton Franklin Legal Aid, to apply to be the director. I shared his passion to make sure everyone was equally represented in Court and agreed to apply with the agreement he would remain on the board. I knew how well respected he was in our legal community and wanted that support to help build and maintain a successful program. He remained on our Board of Directors until he was appointed by Governor Jay Inslee to fill a vacant seat of the Washington State Superior Court. Although my Board of Directors is still very active, I can easily say that there are few who approach the legal field with the same desire for equality and fairness as Judge Mendoza.

Typically, when my attorneys or Judges leave my Board, it is a time of mixed feelings. Often they leave because they are "burnt out" or moving on to other situations where their expertise is needed or



Benton Franklin Legal Aid
Society

5219 W Clearwater Suite 5.
Kennewick WA 99336
Phone: (509) 221-1824
www.bflegalaid.org



valuable. For me, It is always nice to have the fresh perspective and enthusiasm of a new member, but it is a challenge to replace the experience of the outgoing member. With Judge Mendoza, the loss was somewhat mitigated due to the fact that he is always willing to help in any way that he can. That benefit is one of the reasons that Benton Franklin Legal Aid has managed to stay successful when other similar programs are struggling or have failed. He cares those who need the help, and is not afraid to get involved when it is appropriate.

Overall, Judge Salvador Mendoza is a strong and valuable part of the legal system in this Country, and I strongly encourage the Committee on the Judiciary to approve his nomination to the 9th Circuit Court of Appeals.

Sincerely,

Barbara Otte-Potter
Executive Director
Benton Franklin Legal Aid
Kennewick, WA