



November 19, 2024

The Honorable Dick Durbin  
Chairman  
Committee on the Judiciary  
United States Senate  
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Lindsey Graham  
Ranking Member  
Committee on the Judiciary  
United States Senate  
Washington, D.C. 20510

**Re: Letter of Support for Confirmation of Magistrate Judge Benjamin J. Cheeks to the United States District Court for the Southern District of California**

Dear Chairman Durbin and Ranking Member Graham,

On behalf of the affiliate bar associations of the Los Angeles County Unity Bar, San Diego Unity Bar, Orange County Unity Bar, Sacramento County Unity Bar, Central Valley Unity Bar, Unity Bar Association of Kern County, Santa Barbara County Unity Bar, Stanislaus County Unity Bar, Tulare County Unity Bar, Yolo County Unity Bar, Ventura County Unity Bar, and Inland Empire Unity Bar, we offer this letter to express our strong support with respect to President Biden's nomination of Magistrate Judge Benjamin J. Cheeks to the United States District Court for the Southern District of California. The Unity Bars in California are an alliance of specialty bar associations dedicated to promoting diversity in the judiciary, supporting highly qualified diverse judicial candidates, advancing equity and inclusion in the legal community, and building collaboration among members of the legal community.

Judge Cheeks is a highly qualified candidate who has spent his career serving the citizens of our community and touching not only the lives of those around him, but also effectuating change within our legal system. Judge Cheeks started his legal career as an Assistant District Attorney in New York County where he initially was assigned to the Appellate Bureau. He went on to serve, and continued to protect the community, as Assistant District Attorney in the Office of the Special Narcotics Division and Immigrant Affairs Program. With his skills and passion to ensure fairness in the legal system, Judge Cheeks then went on to serve as Assistant United States Attorney for the Southern District of California for three years. After practicing as a prosecutor for seven years, Judge Cheeks served seven more years as a criminal defense attorney at the Law Offices of Benjamin J. Cheeks, APC. While in private practice, Judge Cheeks taught as an adjunct professor at Thomas Jefferson School of Law and at California Western School of Law, which spanned over nine years.

Judge Cheeks is highly regarded in the legal community. In 2022, he was appointed by the Southern District of California to serve as a Lawyer Representative. He also served as a member of the District Court’s Standing Committee on Discipline for the Southern District of California. He has published over 20 articles and Op-Eds on several subjects in various legal publications.

On March 28, 2024, the District Judges of the U.S. District Court of Southern California selected Judge Cheeks to serve as Magistrate Judge. Judge Cheeks is the first African American Magistrate judge to serve in the Southern District since the retirement of Magistrate Judge William McCurine in 2014.

Judge Cheeks has the experience, work ethic, and commitment to the legal community to be a strong District Court Judge. In addition, Judge Cheeks embodies the values upon which the Unity Bar is founded. As leaders of the Los Angeles County Unity Bar, San Diego Unity Bar and Earl B. Gilliam Bar Association, we offer our utmost support of Judge Benjamin J. Cheeks and urge his confirmation to the United States District Court for the Southern District of California.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

<b>Los Angeles County Unity Bar</b>	
Founding Co-Chairs Magdalena Casas & Angela Zanin	<b>South Asian Bar Association Southern California</b> President-Elect Elia Naqvi
<b>Italian American Lawyers Association</b> President Stephanie Story	<b>Black Women Lawyers Association of Los Angeles, Inc.</b> President Shardé Skahan
<b>Japanese American Bar Association</b> President Colin Kawaguchi	<b>Langston Endorsement Org.</b> President Felton T. Newell
<b>Southern California Chinese Lawyers Association</b> President Nadine Tan	<b>Mexican American Bar Association</b> President Elizabeth Hernandez
<b>Asian Pacific American Bar Association</b> Past President Seaton Tsai	<b>Philippine American Bar Association</b> President Alexander Manglinong

<b>San Diego County Unity Bar</b>	
Co-Chairs Veneeta Jaswal and Brandon Kimura	<b>Earl B. Gilliam Bar Association</b> President Loan Shillinger
<b>Japanese American Bar Association</b> President Colin Kawaguchi	<b>Filipino American Lawyers of San Diego</b> President Pauline Villanueva
<b>Iranian American Bar Association – San Diego</b> President Ava Sadeghi	<b>Native American Lawyers Association of San Diego County</b> President Angela Medrano
<b>Pan Asian Lawyers of San Diego</b> President Eric Tran	<b>South Asian Bar Association of San Diego</b> Co-Presidents Arwa Zakir Kakavand and Pragya Sharma
<b>Tom Homann LGBTQ+ Law Association</b> Co-Presidents Jodi Cleesattle and Mark Simpliciano	<b>San Diego Jewish Bar Association</b> Director Erica Bloom

<b>Orange County Unity Bar</b>	
Founding Chair Amber Poston	<b>South Asian Bar Association Southern California</b> President-Elect Elai Naqvi
<b>Filipino Lawyers of Orange County</b> President Nathaniel Epstein	<b>Muslim Bar Association of Southern California</b> Judicial Endorsements Committee Chair Elia Naqvi
<b>Hispanic Bar Association</b> President Shelly Aronson	

<b>Sacramento County Unity Bar</b>	
<b>Disability Inclusivity Bar Association of Sacramento</b> President Alexa R. Greenbaum	<b>Wiley Manuel Bar Association</b> President Rick Owen
<b>Cruz Reynoso Bar Association</b> President Victoria Fernandez	<b>South Asian Bar Association-Sacramento</b> President Aparna Agnihotri

<b>Central Valley Unity Bar</b>	
<b>Central California Asian-Pacific American Bar Association</b> President Midori Howo	<b>Central Valley Black Lawyers Bar Association</b> President Alexia Kirkland
<b>Central Valley South Asian Bar Association</b> President Ramnik Samrao	<b>Fresno County Women Lawyers Association</b> President Regina K. Chessari
<b>Central Valley PrideLaw Association</b> President Richard E. Burchett Jr.	

**Unity Bar Association of Kern County**

Co-Founders Judge Sharon Mettler (Ret.), David Torres, & H.A. Sala

**Santa Barbara County Unity Bar**

Co-Founders Teresa Martinez & Beatriz Pimental Flores

**Stanislaus County Unity Bar**

Co-Founder Kendra Hall

**Tulare County Unity Bar**

Co-Founder and Cochair Casey Martin

**Yolo County Unity Bar**

President & Co-Founder Monica Cavazos Brushia

**Ventura County Unity Bar**

Founder Monique Fierro

**Inland Empire Unity Bar**

Founder Michael Fermin