



May 9, 2022

The Honorable Richard J. Durbin
Chair, Senate Judiciary Committee
U.S. Senator for the State of Illinois

The Honorable Charles Grassley
Ranking Member, Senate Judiciary Committee
U.S. Senator for the State of Iowa

Re: Confirmation of Nancy Maldonado to the United States District Court Northern District of Illinois

Dear Chair Durbin and Ranking Member Grassley,

On behalf of the National Employment Lawyers Association (NELA), and its 4,000 circuit, state, and local affiliate members across the country, we write to express our strongest possible recommendation that Nancy Maldonado be considered for nomination to fill the vacancy on the Northern District of Illinois—a court that, among other things, oversees federal action on workers’ rights.

NELA is the largest professional membership organization in the country comprised of lawyers who represent workers in labor, employment, and civil rights disputes. Founded in 1985, NELA advances employee rights and serves lawyers who advocate for equality and justice in the American workplace. Our members litigate daily in every federal district and circuit, affording NELA a unique perspective on how employment cases actually play out on the ground and an accurate understanding of the profound impact of the judiciary on the daily lives and the rights of working people. Ms. Maldonado is exactly the type of individual who is ideally suited to serve on the federal bench. She is a highly accomplished and well-respected litigator who has extensive experience in all aspects of federal litigation, having spent a career protecting the legal rights of workers.

There can be no question that Ms. Maldonado is eminently qualified to serve as a federal judge. She began her legal career clerking for Judge Ruben Castillo in the Northern District of Illinois. Subsequently, Ms. Maldonado chose to work for the civil rights firm of Miner, Barnhill, and Galland, P.C., representing workers in public interest cases. Her practice has been focused primarily on representing individuals in public interest cases (primarily employment, civil rights, and fraud). In her early career, she devoted most of her time to litigating class actions on behalf of migrant farm workers under the federal Agricultural Worker Protection Act and the California Labor Code. She has also litigated collective actions under the Fair Labor Standards Act on behalf of manufacturing workers. Ms. Maldonado’s practice has evolved and she also has represented executives in connection with separation agreements and provided counsel to non-profit entities regarding compliance with federal and state employment laws.

Ms. Maldonado continues to represent individuals, including in discrimination and sexual harassment matters and in recent years expanded her practice to include representation of individuals in whistleblower actions under the federal and state false claims laws. In connection with her advocacy on behalf of

whistleblowers, she was asked to serve as a Special Assistant State's Attorney to Cook County investigating fraud in connection with a whistleblower claim.

Ms. Maldonado is highly regarded in the legal community. Because of her expertise working with low-wage and immigrant workers, temperament, and her credibility with defense counsel, she has been repeatedly selected by the Illinois Attorney General's office to serve as a monitor overseeing consent decrees in discrimination and harassment cases brought by the Illinois Attorney General against restaurant and manufacturing defendants. In this role, she works closely with the Attorney General's office and the employer's counsel to ensure that the employers are in compliance with the terms of their consent decrees. Ms. Maldonado was also appointed to the Illinois State Police Merit Board where she has interviewed scores of cadet applicants as part of a rigorous selection process and decided matters involving the discipline of officers as a member of a 5-person board.

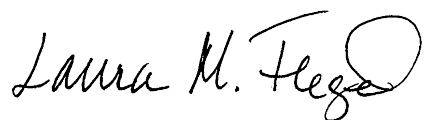
Ms. Maldonado would be the first Latina to fill a federal Article III judgeship based in the Northern District of Illinois and would bring long overdue demographic diversity to the bench. Further, her nomination would fulfill an important stated goal of the Biden Administration, shared by NELA; namely, the selection of nominees who reflect the breadth of professional diversity in the legal community. This aspect of diversity has been long ignored. It is essential to develop a federal bench that includes attorneys who have represented individuals in every walk of life.

As a highly qualified lawyer who has spent her career working in public interest, plaintiff-side civil rights work—she would bring background and perspective that are very much needed on the federal bench. It is well documented that increasing the professional/experiential diversity of the federal judiciary is an important tool to ensure a stronger and fairer judiciary. Ms. Maldonado's demographic and professional backgrounds would strengthen the federal bench. Her work as a monitor and a member of the Illinois State Police Merit Board has only deepened her experience and through these experiences, she has strengthened and honed her skill at the kind of neutrality that is essential to the judiciary.


NELA has the highest regard and esteem for Ms. Maldonado. NELA's foremost goal with respect to the federal judiciary is to ensure that when everyday working people go to court, their cases will be presided over by a judge who is fair-minded, independent, and has the deepest understanding of the law. Ms. Maldonado would bring that depth and breadth to the federal bench. We are confident that she will make an excellent District Judge. We strongly urge the Senate to swiftly confirm Nancy Maldonado to the United States District Court for the Northern District of Illinois.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact Laura Flegel at lflegel@nelahq.org or (202) 674-6552.

Sincerely,



Laura M. Flegel



Jeffrey A. Mittman

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