

PUERTO RICAN BAR ASSOCIATION OF FLORIDA, INC.

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June 10, 2021

Senator Dick Durbin
United States Senate
711 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Senator Chuck Grassley
United States Senate
135 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairman Durbin and Ranking Member Grassley,

As President and on behalf of the Puerto Rican Bar Association of Florida (“PRBAF”), I write to express the support of PRBAF for the nomination of the Honorable Gustavo A. Gelpí, Jr., Chief Judge of the United States District Court for the District of Puerto Rico, to serve as a judge on the Court of Appeals for the First Circuit. PRBAF is a non-profit organization headquartered in Orlando, Florida, dedicated to advancing the interests of legal professionals with ties to Puerto Rico throughout the state of Florida.

Chief Judge Gelpí has served as an exemplary public servant for three decades. After earning an undergraduate degree from Brandeis University and juris doctor degree from Suffolk University Law School, he began his legal career as a judicial clerk to U.S. District Judge Juan M. Pérez-Gimenez in Puerto Rico. After his clerkship, Chief Judge Gelpí worked as Assistant Public Defender, and served a detail as Special Counsel to the United States Sentencing Commission. As Assistant Public Defender, Chief Judge Gelpí tried defended numerous cases before the U.S. District Court for the District of Puerto Rico and U.S. Court of Appeals for the First Circuit.

Chief Judge Gelpí was then appointed Solicitor General of Puerto Rico, which deepened his appellate experience, as he represented the government of Puerto Rico before federal and state courts of appeal, including the U.S. Court of Appeals for the First Circuit. After a brief period in private practice, he was appointed to serve as a United States Magistrate Judge in the District of Puerto Rico in 2001. In 2006, President Bush nominated, and the Senate unanimously confirmed, him for a position as United States District Judge for the District of Puerto Rico. Since 2018, he has served as the District Court’s Chief Judge.

Chief Judge Gelpí is well-regarded by his peers and the legal community in Puerto Rico, has an excellent reputation as a fair and balanced judge, and is recognized for his academic works, particularly on the topic of the constitutional relationship between the United States and Puerto Rico and other U.S. territories. Over the years, he has taught one-week seminars about federal criminal practice, judicial writing, and the history of U.S. territories at law schools in Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Puerto Rico and Hawaii. In addition, he has a stellar reputation for efficiently managing his voluminous and diverse criminal and civil docket, as well as for his effective administration of the Court before and during the Covid-19 pandemic, ensuring the

continued dispensation of justice in the most challenging of time. Among his many important responsibilities, Chief Judge Gelpí also presides over the most comprehensive police reform consent decree between the U.S. Department of Justice and the Puerto Rico Police Department. His oversight work has led to better constitutional police practices and officer accountability in Puerto Rico.

Beyond Puerto Rico, Chief Judge Gelpí has had the opportunity to sit by designation on the First Circuit Court of Appeals. Several First Circuit appellate opinions bear his authorship. Supreme Court Chief Justice John Roberts appointed him to serve on the Judicial Conference Committee on Audits and Accountability, and he continues to serve as a member of the Judicial Conference representing the five judicial districts within the First Circuit. Notably, Chief Judge Gelpí served as national president of the Federal Bar Association from 2013 to 2014.

Chief Judge Gelpí is an ideal nominee to fill the vacancy left by the late Judge Juan R. Torruella, the first and only judge of Puerto Rican, and more broadly Hispanic, descent to serve on the First Circuit. Chief Judge Gelpí would follow in Judge Torruella's footsteps as the second and only judge of Puerto Rican and Hispanic descent on the First Circuit, and continue his legacy as an equally staunch defender of the constitutional rights of Puerto Ricans residing on the island. If confirmed by the Senate, Chief Judge Gelpí would fill a critical gap as the only judge from the District of Puerto Rico to oversee appeals from that District, which has one of the busiest dockets of all the lower courts in the First Circuit.

From the perspective of the Puerto Rican legal community in Florida, Chief Judge Gelpí is the most highly qualified and ideal candidate for this First Circuit vacancy. PRBAF therefore strongly urges the Senate to swiftly confirm Chief Judge Gelpí to the First Circuit.

Respectfully,



Edwin J. Prado-Galarza
President of PRBAF

Cc:
Senator Marco Rubio
284 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Senator Rick Scott
716 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510