



HOUSE OF
REPRESENTATIVES
19TH LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

July 8, 2022

The Honorable Dick Durbin
Chair, Committee on the Judiciary
United States Senate
711 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

RE: Confirmation of Judge Gina R. Méndez-Miró to the U.S. District Court

Dear Chairman Durbin:

As Speaker of the Puerto Rico House of Representatives, I am proud to endorse Hon. Gina R. Méndez-Miró to fill one of the three vacancies on the United States District Court for the District of Puerto Rico. I am well aware of exemplary public service, professional capacity, and her personal qualities.

Since 2016 Judge Méndez-Miró has served as an Appeals Court Judge in Puerto Rico. To fully understand her success as a sitting judge, one must review her professional path in the legal field. Judge Méndez-Miró's legal career began at Goldman, Antonetti, & Córdova, PSC, and later, as an Associate at O'Neill and Borges, P.S.C., two of the most respected and well-known law firms in Puerto Rico. At O'Neill, she excelled in the labor and employment department, litigating civil cases in state and federal courts. Therein, she was respected and highly regarded as a trial attorney. Gina then served as Assistant Attorney General for Human Resources at the Puerto Rico Department of Justice, where she committed to a lifetime in public service. She followed with four years at the Puerto Rico Judicial Branch, where she was dedicated to establishing and promoting access to justice policies that she would further defend from other trenches. Later, after polishing her already solid skills as an attorney serving as General Counsel at the Judicial Branch, where she gave advise over complex legal matters, and supervised the litigation strategy on hundreds of cases. Additionally, she litigated high-profile cases at administrative and judicial forums. Gina later became the Puerto Rico Senate's Chief of Staff, displaying exceptional leadership in assisting legislators with adopting the administration's principal policies.

Today, as an Appellate Judge, she has built a reputation as a hardworking and fair jurist, who issues very well-reasoned and well-written opinions concerning the law and

precedent, but with particular attention to access to justice regardless of the litigants before her. Furthermore, she has managed and reviewed hundreds of cases from the trial court relating to complex civil and criminal legal topics also examined at the federal court. While presiding over those cases in her panel, she has demonstrated great dominion of issues of criminal law relating to searches and seizures, jury trials, speedy trial violations, discovery, confrontation clause, and bail considerations, among others, in addition to civil matters regarding complex labor and employment disputes like those related to discrimination and harassment, as well as medical malpractice claims, access to information, and many more.

Based on my experience and first-hand knowledge of Gina's strengths and capabilities while she worked here in Puerto Rico's legislature, I can attest to the value she would add to the federal Judiciary both personally and from a legal and substantive standpoint. Her unanimous confirmation by the Puerto Rico Senate speaks volumes. As you know, legislative work is sometimes messy and can get the worst and best out of people. Despite that, Gina has always risen to the occasion, becoming an asset in the Senate, mediating at times when complex dynamics between the House and the Senate may have complicated the legislative process. She is a conciliatory person who rejects and rises above petty politics and controversy. As a true arbiter, Gina is a consensus builder, a much-needed quality when presiding over any case or controversy, particularly contentious ones. But do not be mistaken; she is a tough-as-nails leader who can handle incredibly complicated scenarios quickly and gracefully. In my past role as Chair of the Ways and Means Committee, I directly worked with her on issues related to budget and Senate petitions. As Representative, I also recall meeting with her often to discuss important policy issues and working together to advance crucial legislation. She also had ample understanding of the national policy issues. She was an excellent representative of the Senate when we traveled to conferences of the National Hispanic Caucus of State Legislators. Especially her help was instrumental in approving some of the most important legislation of the administration, including important education, energy, and criminal justice reforms.

The fact is that aside from commanding the law –which Judge Méndez-Miró does amply– to preside over cases, you need a clear and calm head on your shoulders, but you need more: you need empathy, integrity, and genuine concern for justice. That is her heart. She deeply cares about the delicate role of the Judiciary in ensuring due process and access to justice. As an attorney and a judge, she has always been aware and never afraid to address and confront the prevailing inequalities that affect litigants in the justice system, which are often the result of socioeconomic disparities and the lack of access to appropriate legal counsel, among others. I believe that diversity of experience, both personal and professional, helps improve judicial decision-making. Certainly, the addition of highly-qualified jurists –like Judge Méndez-Miró– who have worked to ensure access to justice for all is very much needed in our federal courts.

In sum, Gina stands out, in my view, because of her nearly six years of experience in the Puerto Rico judiciary coupled with a wide-ranging base of experience as an attorney in both the private and public sector in all three branches of government, as well as being an extraordinary human being. She is a proven judge, knows the job, and is ready to serve on the federal bench from day one. In addition, Judge Méndez-Miró is a Puerto Rican woman representing the best Puerto Rico offers. She will not disappoint; instead, she will make us proud as the First LGBTQ+ woman to serve in the Puerto Rico District Court.

Judge Méndez-Miró has an impressive background and significant experience as a fair-minded judge, and she would be an excellent addition to the District Court. Therefore, I strongly support her confirmation in the U.S. Senate and urge the Committee on the Judiciary to swiftly move her nomination.

Sincerely,

Rafael Hernández Montañez
Speaker
House of Representatives
Commonwealth of Puerto Rico