

MOTION BY SUPERVISOR HILDA L. SOLIS

July 9, 2024

**Support HR 5754**

Earlier this year, the U.S. House of Representatives passed Congressman Jimmy Gomez’s (CA-34) bipartisan legislation to name the Los Angeles U.S. Courthouse at 350 W. 1st Street in honor of Felicitas and Gonzalo Mendez, American civil rights icons. In 1946, the Mendez family’s activism to stop racial discrimination in California schools, alongside the Ramirez, Estrada, Guzman and Palomino families, culminated in a court ruling that led to the end of segregation in California schools and paved the way for Brown v. Board of Education.

When Gonzalo and Felicitas Mendez attempted to enroll their children in a Westminster school, their children were told that they would have to go to a separate facility reserved for Mexican American students. The Mendez family, along with other aggrieved families, challenged the practice of school segregation in the United States District Court for the Central District of California, in Los Angeles attesting that their children, along with 5,000 other children of "Mexican" ancestry, were facing unconstitutional discrimination by being forced to attend separate schools.

MOTION

SOLIS \_\_\_\_\_

MITCHELL \_\_\_\_\_

HAHN \_\_\_\_\_

BARGER \_\_\_\_\_

HORVATH \_\_\_\_\_

U.S. District Court Judge Paul J. McCormick agreed with the plaintiffs and ordered that the school districts cease their discriminatory practices against the pupils of Mexican descent in the public schools. The school districts appealed the case to the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit, however the Court affirmed Judge McCormick's ruling. Two months later, California Governor Earl Warren signed a bill to end school segregation, making California the first state to officially desegregate its public schools. Seven years later Warren as Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of the United States authored the unanimous opinion in Brown v. Board of Education.

If HR 5457 is signed into law, the Felicitas and Gonzalo Mendez United States Courthouse would be the first federal courthouse named after a Latina out of over 200 named federal courthouses in the U.S. The courthouse is only a few blocks from where the original case was decided. Given Los Angeles County's commitment to supporting its diverse community, the County should offer its support of HR 5457.

**I, THEREFORE, MOVE** that the Board of Supervisors direct the Chief Executive Office Legislative Affairs and Intergovernmental Relations division to support HR 5754.

# # #

HLS:du