



State of California
Office of the Attorney General

ROB BONTA
ATTORNEY GENERAL

July 2, 2024

The Honorable Charles Schumer
Majority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Majority Leader Schumer:

As Attorney General of the State of California, I write to express my strong support for H.R. 5754, introduced by Congressman Jimmy Gomez, which would name the Los Angeles U.S. Courthouse at 350 W. 1st Street in honor of Felicitas and Gonzalo Mendez. Their activism, along with four other families, culminated in the landmark 1946 case *Mendez et al v. Westminster et al* that led to the end of segregation in California schools and paved the way for *Brown v. Board of Education*.

My office's investment in the powerful story of the Mendez, Guzman, Palomino, Estrada, and Ramirez families dates back to the original case in 1946. The Office of the Attorney General of the State of California at the time joined with other organizations supporting the families and filed an amicus curiae brief that argued school segregation was inherently unjust and unconstitutional, stating that:

“We in California like to think of our people as enlightened and free from prejudice... From the state-wide viewpoint... we are convinced that the great majority of Californians want no part of race discrimination or segregation. The Attorney General is convinced that segregation of pupils on account of race is not the policy of the State.”¹

As Attorney General of California today, I take pride in commemorating this historic case, which directly influenced Governor Earl Warren to sign a 1947 law repealing public school segregation statutes in California. Just seven years later, Warren, serving as Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, authored the unanimous opinion in *Brown v. Board of Education*. This landmark decision, influenced by Thurgood Marshall's compelling oral arguments as NAACP chief counsel, ended school segregation nationwide.

¹ Motion and Brief for the Attorney General of the State of California as Amicus Curiae, p. 12, *Gonzalo Mendez et al. v. Westminster School District of Orange County et al.*, 1946.

Nearly 80 years later, I commend the advocacy of the families who fought for equal protection under the law for all children. Today, I honor their legacy in supporting this bill. I strongly believe the Felicitas and Gonzalo Mendez United States Courthouse will be an enduring testament to the maxim “separate is never equal” and the movement for civil rights for all.

This bill passed the House of Representatives unanimously on May 21, 2024, with bipartisan support of Members of Congress from across our country. I respectfully urge you to swiftly pass H.R. 5754 to ensure the lasting and historic impact of the *Mendez v. Westminster* case and commemorate, both permanently and publicly, the many families who fought for equal rights for their children. It will inspire Americans for generations to come with the knowledge that they have the power to fight for a better world.

Sincerely,



ROB BONTA
Attorney General