

March 12, 2024



**SUPPORT THE CONFIRMATION OF JUDGE NANCY MALDONADO
TO THE U.S. COURT OF APPEALS FOR THE SEVENTH CIRCUIT**

Dear Senator:

On behalf of The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights, a coalition of more than 240 national organizations committed to promoting and protecting the civil and human rights of all persons in the United States, we write to express our strong support for the confirmation of Judge Nancy Maldonado to the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Seventh Circuit. The Leadership Conference intends to include your position on the confirmation of Judge Maldonado in our voting record for the 118th Congress.

Judge Maldonado's significant legal career and experience as a fair-minded judge will make her a great addition to the Seventh Circuit. Since 2022, Judge Maldonado has served as a judge on the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of Illinois. Prior to her service on the bench, she specialized in employment law as a partner at Miner, Barnhill & Galland, P.C., where she had also been an associate and a paralegal. A graduate of Harvard College and Columbia Law School, Ms. Maldonado clerked for Judge Rubén Castillo of the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of Illinois. As her long record as an attorney and judge committed to equal justice shows, she is well qualified for this seat.

Judge Maldonado's legal career has been dedicated to advancing equal justice. Before her judicial service, she spent many years in private practice protecting the rights of working people, specializing in employment discrimination and challenging unfair labor practices. Specifically, she successfully defended the rights of migrant farmworkers. She litigated and secured fair overtime compensation and paid rest breaks that had previously been denied to workers,¹ and she secured a class action settlement for violations of the Migrant and Seasonal Agricultural Worker Protection Act.²

During her time on the bench, Judge Maldonado has shown that she is a neutral arbiter. For example, she allowed an excessive force claim to move ahead against an officer with a documented history of violence after his involvement in a brutal arrest.³ In another case, she ruled that an incarcerated man's excessive force and deliberate indifference claims could move forward after he was denied medical care for a mental health breakdown and instead was subjected to violence as the prison guards attempted to "subdue" him.⁴ Judge Maldonado has similarly denied efforts to dismiss sexual harassment⁵ and disability discrimination cases allowing litigants' cases to proceed.⁶ Throughout her tenure on the bench, Judge

¹ *Ortega v. Leslie Farms*, No. 03 1417 (San Diego Cty. Sup. Ct. 2008).

² *Hernandez v. Kovacevich "5" Farms*, No. 04 5515 (E.D. Cal. 2005).

³ *Billups-Dryer v. Vill. of Dolton, Illinois*, No. 20 CV 1597, 2023 WL 6290543 (N.D. Ill. Sept. 27, 2023).

⁴ *Mays v. Pfister*, No. 18-CV-2679, 2023 WL 6290573 (N.D. Ill. Sept. 27, 2023).

⁵ *Dalton v. Sweet Honey Tea, Inc.*, No. 23 CV 01793, 2023 WL 8281524 (N.D. Ill. Nov. 30, 2023).

⁶ *Berman v. Cnty. of Lake*, No. 21 CV 6517, 2023 WL 6388097 (N.D. Ill. Sept. 29, 2023).

Maldonado has demonstrated her even-handed approach to the law and commitment to the rights of all people.

In addition to the professional experience that she would bring to this position, Judge Maldonado would also bring important lived experiences. When she was confirmed to the Northern District of Illinois in 2022, she became the first Latina judge to ever serve as an Article III judge in the state of Illinois. If she is confirmed to this seat, she would be the first Latino/a Article III judge to ever serve on the Seventh Circuit.⁷ While there are nearly 64 million adults in the United States who identify as Hispanic or Latino/a,⁸ our federal appellate courts did not have a Latina judge until the 1992 confirmation of now-Justice Sonia Sotomayor.⁹ Further, there have only ever been nine Latina federal appellate judges in our country's history.¹⁰ Public trust in the judiciary is crucial to its function, and that trust is strengthened when the courts better reflect the vast diversity of our country.¹¹ These varied perspectives also help to improve judicial decision-making.¹² Judge Maldonado has been breaking barriers her entire career, and her confirmation to the Seventh Circuit would help ensure that our courts are reflective of our nation's vast diversity.

Judge Maldonado is an excellent choice for this position, and we strongly urge the Senate to confirm her to the Seventh Circuit. If you would like to discuss this matter further, please contact Lena Zwarenstein, senior director of the fair courts program, at (202) 466-3311. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Maya Wiley
President & CEO



Jesselyn McCurdy
Executive Vice President of Government Affairs

⁷ See [Biographical Directory of Article III Federal Judges, 1789-present](#), FEDERAL JUDICIAL CENTER.

⁸ [Quick Facts, United States](#), U.S. CENSUS BUREAU (accessed March 2024).

⁹ [Sotomayor, Sonia](#), FEDERAL JUDICIAL CENTER (accessed March 2024).

¹⁰ See [Biographical Directory of Article III Federal Judges, 1789-present](#), FEDERAL JUDICIAL CENTER.

¹¹ Maya Sen, [Diversity, Qualifications, and Ideology: How Female and Minority Judges Have Changed, or Not Changed, Over Time](#), 2017 WIS. L. REV. 367 (2017).

¹² ¹²Kate Berry, [Building a Diverse Bench: Selecting Federal Magistrate and Bankruptcy Judges](#), BRENNAN CENTER FOR JUSTICE AT NYU SCHOOL OF LAW AND AMERICAN BAR ASSOCIATION JUDICIAL DIVISION (2017).