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Dear Friend and Colleague,

I would like to take a moment to tell you a story. As a young girl, my mother grew up picking crops in the fields as a migrant worker along side her family. She remembers this man named Caesar Chavez that people talked about with excitement, cheering when newspaper accounts were read aloud, and heads nodding in agreement as the story unfolded. She knew his name, but didn't understand the excitement.

As my mother became older, she learned that Señor Chávez endured the wrath of an unjust system and stood for the rights of people that didn't know they had rights. And, against all odds, he made a difference. To my mother, Caesar Chavez was, and remains, a true American hero—her hero. And, today, as a Justice of the Peace, her hero still lives on in her heart, but there's more work to be done.

As children and young adults, we embrace role models. They are *our* heroes and become part of the DNA of our character. Many heroes are historical figures that advance a cause, or foster a belief that defines society.

There is a vital piece in the development of character that is noticeably missing for the young Mexican-American and that is the positive influence historical figures of the same culture bring to bear on the Mexican-American youth of our society.

Mexican-American children make up the single largest cultural majority in the Texas school system and the numbers will continue to grow. Let us not forget that Mexican-Americans are *Americans*, with a Mexican heritage rather than a European heritage.

As an American, a Mexican-American and a Texan, it is with honor that I proposed to the Texas Board of Education the creation of a Mexican-American history course to be made available as a course for students at the high school level.

Our ability as a society to adapt defines the essence of the American spirit. We must acknowledge the historical significance of the contributions of Mexican-Americans and record them as history so all generations may come to know that cultural diversity is what continues to make America the greatest nation in the world.

I humbly ask for your support on this initiative and that you stand with all Mexican-Americans and declare to the Texas Board of Education the judiciousness of creating curriculum that is inclusive of the historical influences of Mexican-Americans. Our culture defines us and our heritage is our legacy. We are Mexican-Americans.

"We need to help students and parents cherish and preserve the ethnic and cultural diversity that nourishes and strengthens this community - and this nation."-Cesar Chavez

Yours in service,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ruben Cortez".

Ruben Cortez, Jr.

Member Texas Board of Education District 2

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