

Hidalgo County

Proclamation recognizing The Hidalgo County Public Defender's Office and Public Defender Day

Whereas on March 18, 1963, the United States Supreme Court issued a landmark opinion in the case of Gideon v. Wainwright. Clarence Gideon was convicted and incarcerated after he was refused an attorney. He was subsequently acquitted and released after the Supreme Court granted him a retrial and the right to counsel; and

Whereas Gideon v. Wainwright established the 6th Amendment right to counsel for adults, even those who could otherwise not afford to hire an attorney. In that decision, the Supreme Court said, "In our adversary system of criminal justice, any person haled into court, who is too poor to hire a lawyer, cannot be assured a fair trial unless counsel is provided for him."; and

Whereas Public Defenders are often tasked with the difficult job of fighting against injustices and abuses of power, while guarding the constitutional, human, and civil rights of ordinary citizens; and

Whereas the Hidalgo County Public Defender's Office was established in 2005 to protect the rights of Hidalgo County's indigent community; and

Whereas the Hidalgo County Public Defender's Office has helped thousands of qualifying individuals over the last 18 years. The Hidalgo County Public Defender's Office has no power to appoint itself as legal counsel. The Hidalgo County Indigent Defense Office determines indigency after an accused is arrested and in turn their eligibility for indigent defense services. Clients are represented by full time Assistant Public Defenders who are members in good standing with the Texas Bar and who are not permitted to maintain a private practice; and

Whereas the Hidalgo County Public Defender's Office represents indigent individuals charged with misdemeanor and felony offenses from arraignment up to trial or resolution of their case. The office's dynamic team includes attorneys, an investigator, a social worker, an intake officer, and administrative support personnel who all play critical roles serving their clients and the community at large; and

Whereas the Hidalgo County Public Defender's Office is led by Chief Public Defender Larry Esparza. Chief Esparza has led the office since 2019 and has focused on raising the quality of legal representation the office provides to all clients. Chief Esparza has also advocated for pay parity for his staff each year during the annual budget process; and

Whereas the work of the Hidalgo County Public Defender's Office is an invaluable resource to our County, because a strong indigent defense system increases fairness and accuracy of our criminal justice system and contributes to the safety and security of our community.

Hidalgo County

Now therefore, be it proclaimed that the Hidalgo County Commissioners Court recognizes and honors the **Hidalgo County Public Defender's Office** for their tireless pursuit of justice for our indigent population and designate the day of **March 18, 2023** as "**Public Defender Day**" in Hidalgo County.

Approved this 7th day of March 2023.



Richard F. Cortez

RICHARD F. CORTEZ

County Judge

David L. Fuentes

DAVID L. FUENTES

County Commissioner, Pct. 1

Everardo Villarreal

EVERARDO "EVER" VILLARREAL

County Commissioner, Pct. 3

Eduardo Cantu

EDUARDO "EDDIE" CANTU

County Commissioner, Pct. 2

Ellie Torres

ELLIE TORRES

County Commissioner, Pct. 4

Attest:

Arturo Guajardo, Jr.

ARTURO GUAJARDO, JR.

County Clerk

