

Mr. Danny Espino, Board Member

SUBJECT: REQUEST APPROVAL OF RESOLUTION NO. 25-053 OF THE SCHOOL BOARD OF MIAMI-DADE COUNTY, FLORIDA, CELEBRATING AMBASSADOR ARMANDO VALLADARES'S LIFELONG FIGHT FOR FREEDOM AND HUMAN RIGHTS

COMMITTEE: PERSONNEL, STUDENT, SCHOOL & COMMUNITY SUPPORT

LINK TO STRATEGIC PLAN: INFORMED, ENGAGED, & EMPOWERED STAKEHOLDERS

Ambassador Armando Valladares is best known as a bestselling author, poet, painter, and diplomat whose remarkable life embodies courage, conviction, and an unyielding dedication to freedom and human rights. Mr. Valladares's public story began in 1960 when, as an official of the revolutionary government's Ministry of Communications in his hometown of Pinar del Río, Cuba, he was imprisoned for openly expressing his opposition to the growing influence of communism. Without evidence or trial, he was sentenced to thirty years in prison—his only "crime" being his refusal to conform to an ideology that denied human liberty.

During twenty-two years of imprisonment, Mr. Valladares endured torture, humiliation, and long periods of solitary confinement. Yet he refused to submit to indoctrination or to accept the regime's political "rehabilitation." Instead, he turned his suffering into strength—writing poetry on cigarette papers, sometimes even in his own blood. His first collection, *From My Wheelchair*, and later his internationally acclaimed memoir *Against All Hope*, gave the world a rare and powerful testimony of spiritual resistance and the triumph of conscience over oppression.

While he was behind bars, European intellectuals and human rights organizations rallied to his cause. Amnesty International adopted him as one of its first prisoners of conscience, and a global campaign led by his wife, Marta, eventually secured his release in 1982 after intervention by French President François Mitterrand. Following his release, President Ronald Reagan appointed Mr. Valladares as U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations Commission on Human Rights, where he courageously exposed systemic violations of human rights in Cuba and other dictatorships. His leadership and advocacy earned him the Presidential Citizens Medal—the nation's second-highest civilian honor—as well as the Superior Award from the U.S. Department of State.

Ambassador Valladares is also the author of several other notable works, including *The Heart with Which I Live* and *Caverns of Silence*. His writing and public service have been recognized internationally with distinctions such as the Italian Prize for International Journalism, the ISCHIA Award, and the Order of José Cecilio del Valle from Honduras—the highest honor granted to a foreign citizen.

In addition to his literary and diplomatic achievements, Mr. Valladares is an accomplished artist whose paintings are featured in private collections throughout the Americas and Europe. He continues to travel the world advocating for human rights and speaking on issues of faith, freedom, and dignity. Ambassador Armando Valladares is, indeed, a *legend in his own time*. His life reminds us that the pursuit of truth and freedom begins with the courage to stand firm in one's convictions.

This resolution recognizes and honors Ambassador Armando Valladares for his extraordinary courage, profound contributions to literature and diplomacy, and unwavering advocacy for freedom, serving as a powerful testament to his indomitable spirit and enduring legacy as a champion of human rights.

**ACTION PROPOSED BY
MR. DANNY ESPINO:**

That The School Board of Miami-Dade County, Florida, approve Resolution No. 25-053 of The School Board of Miami-Dade County, Florida, celebrating Ambassador Armando Valladares for his extraordinary courage, his commitment to community uplift, and his enduring defense of human liberty, and his lifelong example of moral strength.

**RESOLUTION NO. 25-053
OF THE SCHOOL BOARD OF MIAMI-DADE COUNTY, FLORIDA,
CELEBRATING AMBASSADOR ARMANDO VALLADARES'S
LIFELONG FIGHT FOR FREEDOM AND HUMAN RIGHTS**

WHEREAS, Ambassador Armando Valladares is best known as a bestselling author, poet, painter, and diplomat whose remarkable life embodies courage, conviction, and an unyielding dedication to freedom and human rights. Mr. Valladares's public story began in 1960 when, as an official of the revolutionary government's Ministry of Communications in his hometown of Pinar del Río, Cuba, he was imprisoned for openly expressing his opposition to the growing influence of communism. Without evidence or trial, he was sentenced to thirty years in prison—his only "crime" being his refusal to conform to an ideology that denied human liberty; and

WHEREAS, during twenty-two years of imprisonment, Mr. Valladares endured torture, humiliation, and long periods of solitary confinement. Yet he refused to submit to indoctrination or to accept the regime's political "rehabilitation." Instead, he turned his suffering into strength—writing poetry on cigarette papers, sometimes even in his own blood. His first collection, *From My Wheelchair*, and later his internationally acclaimed memoir *Against All Hope*, gave the world a rare and powerful testimony of spiritual resistance and the triumph of conscience over oppression; and

WHEREAS, While he was behind bars, European intellectuals and human rights organizations rallied to his cause. Amnesty International adopted him as one of its first prisoners of conscience, and a global campaign led by his wife, Marta, eventually secured his release in 1982 after intervention by French President François Mitterrand. Following his release, President Ronald Reagan appointed Mr. Valladares as U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations Commission on Human Rights, where he courageously exposed systemic violations of human rights in Cuba and other dictatorships. His leadership and advocacy earned him the Presidential Citizens Medal—the nation's second-highest civilian honor—as well as the Superior Award from the U.S. Department of State; and

WHEREAS, Ambassador Valladares is also the author of several other notable works, including *The Heart with Which I Live* and *Caverns of Silence*. His writing and public service have been recognized internationally with distinctions such as the Italian Prize for International Journalism, the ISCHIA Award, and the Order of José Cecilio del Valle from Honduras—the highest honor granted to a foreign citizen; and

WHEREAS, in addition to his literary and diplomatic achievements, Mr. Valladares is an accomplished artist whose paintings are featured in private collections throughout the Americas and Europe. He continues to travel the world advocating for human rights and speaking on issues of faith, freedom, and dignity. Ambassador Armando Valladares is, indeed, *a legend in his own time*. His life reminds us that the pursuit of truth and freedom begins with the courage to stand firm in one's convictions; and

WHEREAS, this resolution recognizes and honors Ambassador Armando Valladares for his extraordinary courage, profound contributions to literature and diplomacy, and unwavering advocacy for freedom, serving as a powerful testament to his indomitable spirit and enduring legacy as a champion of human rights;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT:

The School Board of Miami-Dade County, Florida, approve Resolution No. 25-053 of The School Board of Miami-Dade County, Florida, celebrating Ambassador Armando Valladares's lifelong fight for freedom and human rights.

A copy of this resolution is placed in the permanent records of this Board.

Presented this nineteenth day of November, A.D. 2025

THE SCHOOL BOARD OF MIAMI-DADE COUNTY, FLORIDA

SCHOOL BOARD CHAIR

ATTEST

Secretary