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QUIJANO AND GRANADOS OPPOSE SALE OF FORMER UNION COUNTY JAIL PROPERTY TO ICE OR OTHER DETENTION CENTERS, CITING COMMUNITY CONCERNS

UNION COUNTY, NJ— March 28, 2025 — Assemblywoman Annette Quijano and Union County Commissioner Sergio Granados, both running for Assembly in the 20th Legislative District, issued a joint statement today voicing strong opposition to two resolutions introduced at the Union County Board of County Commissioners meeting on Thursday evening, which would allow Union County to subdivide and advertise for the potential sale of the former jail site at 15 Elizabethtown Plaza in Elizabeth.

Although the resolutions do not finalize any sale, both leaders expressed deep concerns over what such a sale could ultimately lead to—most notably, the return of a correctional or immigration detention facility, including the possibility of being used by ICE, in the heart of Elizabeth.

During the Board of County Commissioners meeting, Commissioner Granados voted “no” on the resolutions, standing in direct opposition to advancing the process at this time.

“As public officials, we understand the importance of fiscal responsibility and the need to explore options that can ease financial burdens for our residents,” **said Commissioner Sergio Granados**. “However, we must also balance that responsibility with our moral obligation to protect vulnerable populations. This proposed sale raises serious concerns about what could follow, and my ‘no’ vote last night was for the people of Union County—because this potential use is simply not in line with the inclusive, supportive vision I’ve always stood for. I’ve been a longtime advocate for immigrant rights and have worked closely with organizations like Make the Road New Jersey and others. While I respect the County’s intent, the uncertainty surrounding this site’s future—without clear, enforceable safeguards—is not a risk I can support.”

Quijano and Granados emphasized that they do not support any sale of the property that could result in its use by ICE or any entity operating a detention center. Instead, they expressed hope that Union County will work to identify an alternate use for the site—one that reflects the priorities of the surrounding community, such as affordable housing, supportive services, or other inclusive development. They are hopeful that the County can identify a developer whose vision aligns with these goals and ensures the site becomes a resource that uplifts and serves the people of Elizabeth and beyond.

“I am incredibly concerned about Union County moving forward with the process to sell the former prison here in Elizabeth,” **stated Assemblywoman Annette Quijano**. “Elizabeth is among the most diverse

communities in the United States -- an attribute that defines the warmth of our people. We should not have to live in the shadow of Donald Trump's ICE right here in the center of our city. The use of this space for the detention of immigrants would have a chilling impact on the vibrancy of this community. I understand that the County has the responsibility to our taxpayers to find an entity to utilize this space — but it also has the responsibility to balance any financial benefits with the values of our community. I believe there is an opportunity to limit the uses available for a future owner of the site and I will work with our community, state, and county officials to find a solution that resolves this concern.”

The resolution allows for the issuance of a Request for Proposals (RFP) to assess market interest and potential value. County Manager Edward T. Oatman emphasized that no decision has been made and that the RFP would include limitations on the use of the property. However, advocates and local leaders warn that those limitations may not be enough to ensure the future use of the site reflects the values of the community.

Both Granados and Quijano emphasized that they remain committed to a future for the site that reflects the needs and values of the 20th Legislative District community and beyond—one that centers inclusion, opportunity, and care. For more information about Annette Quijano and Sergio Granados, contact Quijano4Assembly@gmail.com or Granados4Assembly@gmail.com.