

1 **ARMILLA STALEY-NGOMO**  
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9  
10 UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT  
11 SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA

12 FRANCISCO CARLOS ROMERO  
13 DIAZ,

14 Petitioner,

15 v.

16 WARDEN, Otay Mesa Detention  
17 Center,

18 Respondent.

Case No.: 25-cv-3616-LL-AHG

19 **STATUS REPORT**  
20 **&**  
21 **MOTION TO WITHDRAW AS**  
22 **COUNSEL**

23 On December 18, 2025, the Court conditionally appointed Federal  
24 Defenders of San Diego, Inc. to evaluate Mr. Romero-Diaz's case and  
25 file either additional documents or a status report with a  
26 recommendation about how to proceed. Federal Defenders hereby files  
27 this status report, along with a request to withdraw as counsel.

28 After this Court issued the conditional appointment order and  
Federal Defenders entered a notice of appearance, counsel received an  
email from Jesse Imbriano at Casa Cornelia Law Center. Mr. Imbriano  
explained that Casa Cornelia is already providing pro bono  
representation to Mr. Romero-Diaz in other immigration matters. They  
were unaware that Mr. Romero-Diaz had independently filed this pro

1 se habeas petition. After learning about the pro se petition, Casa  
2 Cornelia contacted Mr. Romero-Diaz to tell him that they were willing  
3 to represent him pro bono in his habeas case, so long as his case passed  
4 an internal conflicts check. He agreed to let Casa Cornelia represent  
5 him. He had also previously signed an agreement with Casa Cornelia  
6 contemplating potential habeas representation.

7 Casa Cornelia has now confirmed that there is no conflict, and  
8 they and Federal Defenders agree that Casa Cornelia should represent  
9 Mr. Romero-Diaz in this litigation. Among other benefits, this  
10 arrangement will conserve Federal Defenders' habeas resources,  
11 which—as this Court's order indicates—are finite. As soon as Federal  
12 Defenders withdraws as counsel, Casa Cornelia attorney Arwa  
13 Kakavand will file a notice of appearance and amended petition well  
14 before the current January 7, 2026 deadline. Casa Cornelia does not  
15 intend to file a financial affidavit, as they are not seeking appointment  
16 under the Criminal Justice Act.

17 For the foregoing reasons, Federal Defenders of San Diego, Inc.  
18 respectfully moves to withdraw as counsel for Mr. Romero-Diaz.

19  
20  
21 Respectfully submitted,

22 Dated: December 22, 2025

*s/ Armilla Staley-Ngomo*

**ARMILLA STALEY-NGOMO**

Federal Defenders of San Diego, Inc.

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