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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Board of Parole Hearings (BPH) Grants Release to Convicted Murder Mendel Mendez
CDCR #V70408; Court Case #BF106469A

(Bakersfield) – Kern County District Attorney Cynthia Zimmer announced that the California Board of Parole Hearings (BPH) granted release to convicted murderer Mendel Mendez. On September 3, 2025, BPH found that Mendez no longer poses a current and unreasonable risk to public safety. Representing the District Attorney's Office was Deputy District Attorney Gina Nargie.

On May 26, 2004, Mendez shot and killed Rafael Gutierrez Melgoza. At approximately 1:54pm, Mendez and the victim were talking by a tree near Main and Ninth Streets in Delano. Witnesses heard multiple gunshots moments later. Ultimately, the investigation revealed that Mendez shot the victim with a .380 caliber handgun in the head, chest, and abdomen.

On January 19, 2005, a Kern County Jury found Mendez guilty of one count of murder in the second degree and found it true that he personally used a firearm during the commission of the murder. On February 17, 2005, a Kern County Judge sentenced him to 40 years to life in prison.

On September 3, 2025, the BPH conducted Mendez's initial parole hearing. Mendez was before the Board of Parole for early release consideration pursuant to California Elder Parole Laws. In California, incarcerated persons are eligible for the Elderly Parole Program after reaching age 50 and being continuously incarcerated for 20 years. Mendez is currently 84 years old and has served approximately 21 years in state prison.

At the hearing, Mendez's commissioners focused on his advanced age, mental health disorder, sobriety in prison and lack of rules violations. The Kern County District Attorney's Office asked the BPH to deny parole based on specific concerns to Mendez's ability to manage his mental health disorder in the community. The BPH found that Mendez was suitable for parole and no longer posed a current

unreasonable risk of danger to society.

Assistant District Attorney Joseph Kinzel commented; “Serving 21 years of a 40 years-to-life sentence does not adequately serve justice. The leniency of Elder Parole Laws prioritizes the perpetrator over the victim, compromising true accountability and diminishing public safety.”