

(H. B. 2885)

(No. 130-2011)

(Approved July 12, 2011)

AN ACT

To designate PR Road 503, which extends from Ponce to Adjuntas, as the “David Medina-Feliciano Road.”

STATEMENT OF MOTIVES

Supporting the study of the arts and the rehabilitation of persons with disabilities are two very important objectives of our society. A significant number of people in Puerto Rico, despite having physical disabilities, have artistic abilities.

A great example of this was David Medina-Feliciano. He was a painter from Ponce who, in spite of being confined to a wheelchair due to Werdnig-Hoffmann disease—a type of spinal muscular atrophy—and with very little formal arts education, became one of the top landscape and *costumbrista* painters in Puerto Rico.

David Medina-Feliciano was born in Adjuntas on November 6, 1961, and was the seventh son of a numerous family. His parents were *Doña* Blanca Edith Feliciano and *Don* Angel Medina-Feliciano who, following medical advise and in an effort to provide their son with the best care, moved to Ponce in search of a warmer weather.

In his early years, David started showing that his motor skills were poor and somewhat different. It did not take long before his parents noticed that David was not as healthy as his siblings. One time, reminiscing about his long stay at *Hospital del Niño* in San Juan, David could not forget the memories of children who, in spite of being sick, played, laughed, and ran around a room full of toys where he only acted as an observer.

Little by little he was becoming aware of his situation, and without even realizing it, he became a typical person and as capable as any other, despite his physical disability—which at first was diagnosed as muscular dystrophy and eventually as Werdnig-Hoffmann disease—restricted his body’s performance. His severe restrictive pulmonary disease made him constantly ill; hence, hospital stays were very common.

As the child grew physically, he also developed an amazing ability, which was probably where he stored all his limitations, and began expressing in black and white his memories of the countryside of Adjuntas, where he lived as a child. His first drawings were closed houses surrounded by an overflow of nature—perhaps evoking his desire for freedom—cars without wheels probably revealing his true feelings, and the drawings of his “treasures.” When David began to show his art skills, his parents made great sacrifices to buy him notebooks, pencils, and other art supplies. This is when the story began, a great painter, a master of the canvas and paintbrush, who was no longer known for his illness but for his talent.

At the age of 16, David enrolled in the Ponce Vocational Rehabilitation Center under the guidance of Professor Sixto Rosado. At that time, Professor Rosado tried to direct him towards ceramic arts, but his painter spirit resisted and two weeks later the “sculptor” rebelled, and the painter was revealed. Painting was definitely his true language. Three years were more than enough for him to learn to control and coordinate his hand movements and master the oil technique. Of all the painting techniques, oil reigned supreme and dominated his works, although he also tried watercolors and acrylic painting.

Once he finished school, David began to shape and strengthen his style. His realistic landscapes prove that he was a great observer and his attention to details shows that he had a sensitive but strong soul, was a nature lover, and loved life itself:

I have always admired those trees that due to the comings and goings of life were not able to grow tall, to flower and bear fruit, but their desire to live overcame the ravages of nature and life itself and have become stronger and even impervious to the ax of the woodcutter to remain forever standing.

David was self-taught and learned a lot from reading. He read about all sorts of things. The Bible was one of his favorites. The life and works of famous painters were also among his favorites. He read and learned from all of them: Rembrandt, Rubens, Velázquez, Picasso, Dalí, Da Vinci, El Greco, Goya, Van Gogh, Miguel Angel, Rafael, among others. He loved Greek and Byzantine paintings, as well as the Renaissance art, which he believed to be delightful; Gothic art, and all the period from the 16th century to the present.

His style, defined as realistic, and his *costumbrista* landscapes, distinguished his work. He represented Puerto Rico in several competitions. He was ranked among the top positions in the collective art exhibition of the Sister Kenny Institute in Minneapolis. In 1986, he won the “Krelitz Best of Show” award for his work “Mi Barrio.” His paintings toured different places inside and outside of Puerto Rico in countless exhibitions. Among these places were the Tibes Indian Ceremonial Center; Pontifical Catholic University of Puerto Rico in Ponce; Ponce College of Technology; Ponce City Hall, La Fortaleza, the Salón de los Próceres at the Capitol, La Galería de Telemundo, the Inter-American University, Centro Sor Isolina Ferré, Western Federal Savings Bank, la Feria de Arte de Santo Domingo in Dominican Republic, Sister Kenny Institute of Minneapolis, among others. In all these places, spectators could perceive his noble soul and his free spirit, the explorer beyond the apparent truth. David’s artwork made people realize the extent of their potential and understand that physical limitations do not pose an obstacle to achieve goals, as it was aptly noted during the dedication of one

of his exhibitions. David has an extensive catalog, which includes works such as: “Mi Barrio,” “El Camerino,” “La Flor Olvidada,” “Paisaje Taurino,” “Amanecer Marino,” “El Jíbaro y sus Gallos,” “El Caminante,” “Nostalgia,” “Ramo de Flores,” “Paso a Paso,” and “La Madrina,” among others. The latter is recognized as one of his best works. In addition, many other of David’s paintings have been acquired by art connoisseurs.

David had a strong will to live, but he also knew his life was coming to an end when he was admitted to the San Lucas Hospital in Ponce due to bilateral pneumonia. After undergoing very painful treatments and being connected to a ventilator, David returned home in February 1997. He was very frail, but always surrounded by his family’s indescribable love. Even though he was weak, he managed to paint his last work. On April 22, 1997, he was admitted back to the hospital and passed away on May 7, 1997, around 8:00 p.m., surrounded by his closest relatives at the intensive care unit of San Lucas Hospital in Ponce.

The fact that David Medina had been in a wheelchair since his childhood did not prevent him from excelling: “A person with disabilities is not that who has physical limitations, it is someone who does nothing to overcome the limitations.”

David Medina-Feliciano was outlived by his parents, *Don* Angel Medina-Feliciano and *Doña* Blanca Enid Feliciano-Caraballo, as well as by his siblings: Angel, Nilda Enid, Wilfredo, Reynaldo, Miriam, Alcides, Rubén, María de los Ángeles, and Margarita (who also suffers from Werdnig-Hoffmann); and more than 17 nephews.

The example of perseverance set by David Medina-Feliciano is praiseworthy. He was an illustrious painter and great human being who showed that physical limitations are not an obstacle when you bear your heart and soul into what you do.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF PUERTO RICO:

Section 1.- It is hereby provided that the PR Road 503, which extends from Ponce to Adjuntas, shall be designated as the “David Medina-Feliciano Road.”

Section 2.- The Public Structures and Highway Naming Commission of the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico shall take the necessary measures to enforce the provisions of this Act.

Section 3.- This act shall take effect immediately after its approval.

CERTIFICATION

I hereby certify to the Secretary of State that the following **Act No. 130-2011 (H. B. 2885)** of the **5th Regular Session** of the **16th Legislative Assembly of Puerto Rico**:

AN ACT to designate PR Road 503, which extends from Ponce to Adjuntas, as the "David Medina-Feliciano Road."

has been translated from Spanish to English and that the English version is correct.

In San Juan, Puerto Rico, on this 30th day of September, 2014.

Juan Luis Martínez Martínez
Acting Director