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CONTACT: Maria Hernandez

PHONE: (909) 447-2406

El Monte Union Senior Makes School History with All-State Honor Choir Selection

EL MONTE – El Monte Union senior Alexander Gonzalez made El Monte High School (EMHS) history with his selection to the prestigious California Choral Directors Association's (CCDA) All-State Honor Choir, making him the first Lion to ever earn a spot among the top 300 vocal talents in the state.

Gonzalez, who began his choir journey as a freshman at EMHS, reached a major milestone in October 2024 by qualifying for the regional choir. At his audition, he distinguished himself as one of the top scorers, earning a spot in the California All-State Choir. During the audition process, the senior impressed judges with a memorized Italian song "Sebben Crudele" and demonstrated his abilities in music reading, scales, aural skills, and sight-reading.

"To see a student from our program reach this level is truly remarkable. Alexander's commitment and passion for music have set him apart," said Joel Whisler, who has taught music at El Monte High for 30 years. "Getting to watch and work with Alexander has been an immense honor for me, and I could not be prouder of his achievement. This is a milestone, not just for him, but for our entire program."

Students from across three California regions: Coastal, Central, and Southern are eligible to audition for the State Honor Choir. Students must first tryout for their Regional Honor Choir and once selected are eligible to audition for the State Honor Choir.

Students like Gonzalez, who qualified for the State Honor Choir, then traveled to Sacramento for three days of intensive rehearsals with renowned college choir directors. The experience culminated with a performance during the 2025 California All-State Music Education Conference (CASMEC), which was hosted at the Sacramento Memorial Auditorium on Jan. 16-18.

"This whole experience has been so surreal to me. I joined choir on a whim as a freshman, not knowing how far I would go," said Gonzalez. "Now that I've experienced it firsthand, it has truly solidified my passion for singing."

Gonzalez impulsively joined choir coming out of virtual learning after the COVID-19 pandemic. He was drawn to the opportunity to be part of a group and the shared passion for music cemented his interest.

Inspired by his experience on the All-State Honor Choir and his passion for music, Gonzalez aims to continue his musical career as a vocal major at Pasadena City College where he hopes to start his path to becoming a choir teacher back in El Monte High.

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“Alexander’s achievement is a significant milestone for our District, highlighting the incredible talent within our schools,” Superintendent Dr. Edward Zuniga said. “We are incredibly proud of his success, and this will undoubtedly inspire other students to pursue excellence in their own pursuits.”

PHOTO CAPTION:

EMUHSD ALL STATE CHOIR 1: El Monte High School senior Alexander Gonzalez (center) received a certificate of recognition for being selected to the California Choral Directors Association’s (CCDA) All-State Honor Choir during the El Monte Union Board of Trustees meeting on Jan. 22, while being joined by his choir teacher Joel Whisler (left), his parents (middle), and Principal Eddie Cuevas (right).

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The vision of the El Monte Union High School District is to empower and motivate our students to be resilient, college and career ready, lifelong learners and contributing members of our global society.