

December 18, 2017

To Whom it May Concern:

It is my pleasure to write this letter of recommendation for Kenia Calderon to be recognized with the Business Record Forty Under 40 Award. Kenia is a passionate voice in central Iowa working to create systems that address barriers to education for immigrants, build connections around the state and create safe, fair communities for all Iowans, native and new.

Kenia and I first met in 2014 at a legal clinic where she was a volunteer helping young people and their families apply for Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) status. Since then, Kenia has continued to inspire by engaging in new, creative and powerful ways to make positive impacts in her community.

One of the most powerful ways Kenia works to bring about positive change is by sharing her story and empowering others to do the same. She values individuals and their stories, and knows that stories are powerful connectors. She's told her own immigration story countless times to help make educators and school administrators aware of the unique hurdles that immigrant students and their families face in our public education system. She has achieved concrete policy changes by encouraging Drake University to expand their outreach to and acceptance of DACA recipients. She has challenged elected officials and candidates on all levels of government to respect the experience of immigrants, to call for changes to the unjust immigration system that keeps mixed status families like hers in a state of limbo and fear, and to create a safe space for other undocumented young people who have begun to lose hope.

Kenia's civic and professional contributions to the economic, social and cultural fabric of our state will continue to be felt long into the future. Her work with young immigrants and their families is an investment in our future and her fearless work to correct unjust policies and build up new leaders will ensure that the voices of Iowa's immigrants continue to be heard and valued.

I continue to be inspired and energized by Kenia, and I'm honored to recommend that she be recognized for her work and dedication to making a significant, positive and measurable difference to the quality of life in Iowa. She is an outstanding young woman, immigrant and Iowan.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Erica Johnson". The ink is dark and the signature is fluid, with a large loop for the 'E' and a long, sweeping line for the 'J'.

Erica Johnson  
Director, AFSC Iowa

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