



**Iowa
Citizens for
Community
Improvement**

We talk. We act. We get it done.

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December 23, 2017

Re: Letter of recommendation for Vanessa Marcano-Kelly

I am writing to recommend Vanessa Marcano-Kelly for a "Forty under 40" award this year (2018). Without a doubt, she's a leader who has made a big difference and had a significant impact in her community.

I first met Vanessa about six years ago (January 2012) when I hired her to work for Iowa Citizens for Community Improvement (CCI) as a community organizer. Her job with us involved organizing Latino immigrants in central Iowa – and across the state – on a variety of critical social justice issues like wage theft, workplace safety, decent and affordable housing, immigration reform, stopping deportations, and fair treatment by law enforcement.

Vanessa was exceptional; her work was exemplary. She touched the lives of thousands of people. She was diligent, persistent and focused like a laser-beam on empowering immigrants – who had been taken advantage of, disenfranchised and pushed to the margins of society – so that they, as an organized group using their own leadership abilities, could tackle tough issues and win justice for themselves and their families. Vanessa's hard work, initiative, compassion and commitment to social justice were at the core of this. She made it happen, in a big and impactful way, because she's dedicated to making life better for a whole lot more people – and to making sure the voiceless are speaking (themselves) with a powerful voice.

There's nothing that Vanessa can't do; she's a force for good. And on top of this, she has a deep and abiding passion for social justice and the rights of all people. She is committed to the simple notion that we all do better when we all do better.

Thank you for considering my thoughts, comments and reflections. Please contact me if you have any questions or need additional information.

All the best,

Hugh Espey, Executive Director
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