

December 17, 2017

To whom it may concern,

Please accept this letter as a nomination of Vanessa Marcano-Kelly to the 40 under 40 honors. My name is Ana Mancebo, Vanessa and I have worked together in several capacities from 2012 until late 2016 when I moved out of state.

Vanessa was my co-worker at Iowa Citizens for Community Improvement (CCI) from late 2012 to mid 2014. As the team leader for the Latino Organizing Project which her and I worked under, Vanessa brought her tenacious spirit and strong leadership skills to tackle issues in the local Latino and immigrant community of Des Moines. Vanessa accomplished a tremendous amount in her time as a staff member at CCI. Some examples include, helping workers recover unpaid wages and helping workers secure rights by helping large corporations develop worker's rights provisions in their employee policies. Vanessa worked alongside the local Latino community to advocate for the respect and fair treatment of immigrants. Under the CCI Action Fund (CCI's sister organization), she regularly organized groups of people to lobby at the statehouse on behalf of legislation that could improve the lives of immigrants and workers in Iowa such as legislation to increase the minimum wage. In addition, she organized community forums to help foster positive relationships between local law enforcement and minority groups. After leaving CCI to focus on language interpretation work, Vanessa joined the CCI board of directors to continue this work which is so important to her.

In 2014, when I left CCI to help launch the Solidarity Microfinance program, a microfinance peer-lending program for low-income women entrepreneurs in Des Moines, Vanessa supported me by volunteering at events and organizing informational sessions to help women learn about the program. Finally, Vanessa and I served together on the board of the Iowa Latino Center where we worked with other professionals to help bring the idea of a Latino cultural center in Des Moines to life.

Central to Vanessa's leadership style is respect for other people. She empowers others to share their experiences and beliefs. She is patient, kind and listens to others. As an immigrant from Venezuela, Vanessa has first-hand experience of the barriers and challenges immigrants and Latinos face in adjusting to life in the United States. Consequently, she comes from a genuine place of empathy in each interaction - both in her professional work as a Spanish language interpreter and in her community work as an activist.

Vanessa is an exemplary citizen and one of the most determined, hardworking and courageous individuals I know. She would make an excellent candidate for the 40 under 40 honors.

Sincerely,



Ana Mancebo

515-201-8311

emailanamancebo@gmail.com