

VANESSA ZAPATA



UNDERGRAD: MOUNT HOLYOKE COLLEGE

GRAD SCHOOL: VANDERBILT UNIVERSITY LAW SCHOOL

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Vanessa Zapata is currently a staff attorney with Just Zero. She was instrumental in advancing health justice during her remarkable tenure at the Tennessee Justice Center (2017-2024). Beginning her journey as an intern and later rising to a staff attorney, Vanessa was a model of courageous devotion to clients, fearlessly standing by their side through some of the most difficult challenges. Her work extended far beyond legal counsel; she served as a relentless advocate, ensuring that every client's voice was heard, especially those from marginalized communities. Her empathy and unwavering commitment earned her the trust and respect of the families and individuals she served.

As Director of Health Policy and Equity, Vanessa shaped TJC's health equity agenda with her unique blend of visionary leadership and deep dedication to systemic change. She recognized that policy work required not only a strategic mind but also a compassionate heart. With a keen sense of justice and conscientious attention to detail, Vanessa worked tirelessly to dismantle barriers to healthcare access, promote equitable policies, and ensure that Tennesseans of all ages, backgrounds, and abilities could receive the care they deserved. Her legacy at TJC is one of transformation. Under her leadership, the organization became a more effective advocate for health justice, and her contributions continue to shape the lives of countless Tennesseans. Vanessa's work has left an indelible mark on the fabric of health equity, and her efforts will undoubtedly inspire future generations of advocates.