

Maricela Lechuga – Biography

Maricela Lechuga is an attorney and resident of the Cassel neighborhood below the flight path of the Reid Hillview airport where she has lived most of her life.

Before law school, she worked as a community organizer at various community-based organizations such as Casa De Maryland, where she led large-scale legal clinics helping thousands of DREAMers apply for Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA). She was also an Associate Director for the Parent Institute for Quality Education, empowering parents with children in public schools, and an after-school Director at Boys and Girls Club in Santa Cruz and East San Jose, CA.

During law school, at American University Washington College of Law, in DC, Maricela clerked at the U.S. Department of Justice and various civil rights organizations including the Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund (MALDEF).

Upon graduating from law school, she was selected as one of 62 Equal Justice Works Fellows from a highly competitive pool of 337 candidates across the country.

As an Equal Justice Fellow she designed and executed a two-year legal project to assist refugee mothers and their children seeking gender-based asylum in the U.S.

In 2018, when the Trump administration implemented the zero tolerance policy and began separating families at the border, she volunteered at an immigrant family detention facility in Dilly, T.X. with the CARA Project and helped prepare refugee mothers and their children for credible fear interviews with an asylum officer.

Upon returning to her hometown of San Jose, California, Maricela has cut her teeth into a number of issues that immediately impact her family and local community living in East San José.

In 2019, Maricela was a named plaintiff in a MALDEF lawsuit against President Trump over the 2020 US Census, representing East San Jose, a largely immigrant and Latino enclave.

In 2020, Maricela was appointed Airport Commissioner for Santa Clara County (“SCC”) Reid Hillview Airport (RHV) by Supervisor Cindy Chavez. As a resident of the RHV airport buffer zone, Maricela initiated a public awareness campaign informing her neighbors about the environmental issues, public health crisis, and racist legacy that is the RHV Airport. This grassroots effort was instrumental in helping to achieving a historic 5-0 vote in favor of airport closure at the August 17, 2021, SCC Board of Supervisor meeting.

Maricela worked at the Law Foundation of Silicon Valley for a year and a half advocating for tenants. She is now an in-house attorney at Denodo Technologies Inc.