



## **Maria Montes**

### **Community Engagement and Organizing Manager**

Maria Montes is a native of San Diego, California. Hence, it was in San Diego where she first began her work in community engagement and organizing. She was living in a place centered at the crossroads between what is and what could have been. Where a border halts dreams. She was surrounded by the stories of those who wished to make a better life for themselves and migrate to the United States yet couldn't through no fault of their own. Fueled by these stories, Maria began organizing with peers to build leadership opportunities for Latinx youth so they could one day change the unjust policies that had left so many dreams stranded just a few miles away.

Maria joined the Comunidades Unidas team in 2015 as an intern in the Women's Health Program while pursuing her Bachelor's degree in Economics from the University of Utah. Throughout her time at CU, Maria has had the opportunity to work in various fields including health advocacy, civic engagement, and community organizing. As an ACA navigator, she organized with Latinx families to shift the narrative around programs like Medicaid and SNAP and increase transparency and accountability from the agencies that administer these programs to decrease health disparities. And while coordinating voter registration and Get-Out-To-Vote efforts, Maria organized with community leaders to energize Latinx in Utah's 4th Congressional District, Utah's most diverse district, to elect officials that reflect their values.

Currently, Maria serves as CU's Community Engagement and Organizing Manager where she leads side by side with a team of dedicated community organizers and immigration advocates to fight for equitable access to healthcare and low cost immigration services that can empower Utah's Latinx community. Through her role Maria also has the opportunity to coordinate Utah's only immigrant rights coalition, the Enriching Utah Coalition to work with allies and community members affected alike to remove the barriers that halt immigrant's dreams from becoming a reality.

