

Student's Name

Professor's Name

Course Name/Code

Date

Numbers and Neighborhoods

I grew up in a zip code where life expectancy was eleven years shorter than the zip code six miles north. I did not encounter this as a statistic until I was twenty-two. Growing up, I knew it as a series of observations: the corner pharmacy that closed without replacement, my grandmother's specialist forty minutes away by bus, the elementary school that canceled recess when the air quality index climbed too high. Nobody explained the through-line. It took leaving and coming back to understand what I had been looking at.

I graduated with a degree in biology and returned home to work as a community health worker. For two years I sat with patients who had not eaten before taking medications that require food. I called county offices about lead testing backlogs. I connected families to assistance programs they had never heard of, and then watched those families navigate a system that seemed designed to lose them. The work clarified something for me: I was addressing symptoms without the tools to understand the disease. Individual interventions are necessary and insufficient.

The MPH program at [University] is where I want to acquire those tools. The concentration in health policy and the certificate in environmental health align directly with the questions I have not been able to answer in the field. How do we quantify the health impact of zoning decisions? What does the evidence actually say about which community-level interventions shift long-term outcomes? I want to study these questions with the rigor they require and alongside people who have spent careers on them. The program's partnership with the city health department is specifically compelling: the ability to work on active policy

questions during the program, rather than only in theory, is the bridge I need between direct service and systems-level work.

After completing the MPH, my goal is to work on housing and health policy, either within local government or with an environmental justice organization focused on under-resourced urban communities. I have seen, on a specific street on a specific block, what the gap between policy and lived experience costs. I want to spend my career helping close it.

The eleven-year difference between those two zip codes is not inevitable. It is the product of decisions: zoning decisions, infrastructure decisions, funding decisions, made by specific people in specific rooms. I want to understand precisely how those decisions are made and evaluated so that I can be in those rooms and know what to say.



College Essay