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To whom it may concern:

It is my great pleasure to write a reference letter in support of Ana Sofía Vargas Virella and her application for the Health Research scholarship. Ana joined my lab in early June 2022 through the PR-LSAMP research program. Ana first approached me in June 2021 with interest in my research. Although Ana's academic record was outstanding, I could not mentor her at the time because my lab was full. She insisted multiple times over the year until a spot opened in June 2022. At this point, I was very impressed by her amazing grades in challenging science courses and the perseverance that she showed for joining my research team. The only concern that I had was that she did not have any research experience and was more interested in going to medical school than pursuing a career in research.

All my doubts about Ana quickly disappeared, she was great since the first day of joining my lab. She was very responsible and came on time every day. She was willing to learn and was a pleasure to teach both at the bench and about the theoretical aspect of the project. In this short amount of time, she has completely exceeded my expectations as she has revealed herself to be responsible, ambitious, disciplined, and highly motivated. She always goes above and beyond what is asked. She has made her project her own by understanding every aspect of it and reading the literature. All this effort and care for the project leads her to consistently suggest clever new experiments and ideas. She also works incredibly hard to achieve the goals of her project in a timely manner. I have been impressed by how quickly she is able to learn, overcome new challenges, and become independent on new tasks. Even though Ana recently joined my lab, she can confidently and independently run her own experiments and take control of most situations. Additionally, she is constantly presenting new ideas and initiatives to improve the lab.

She excels at communicating if she has any doubts or concerns about the procedures in order to make sure everything runs smoothly. She is also great at training her peers because she makes sure that they learn all the techniques properly. Then, she supervises them continuously to ensure that the laboratory protocols are followed. Furthermore, she gives unexperienced students valuable advice to help them succeed in their projects and is well respected among all the members of the lab. All these qualities make Ana an outstanding leader and lab mate. At the end of the summer research program, she presented her findings to other professors and students. Her presentation was amazing and made me realized that I was working with a special kind of student that could end up been a great researcher if she decides to pursue this career path. Her passion and enthusiasm for research is admirable. I am very glad that she decided to stay in the PR-LSAMP program for the 2022-2023 academic year to continue working in my laboratory.

Outside of the lab, Ana stands out as an excellent student and community leader. She belongs to the board of directors of two student organizations: *Círculo de Premédica* (President) and *Neuroboricuas* (Treasurer). As president of *Círculo de Premédica*, she coordinates various activities with different healthcare providers and community organizations in order to provide resources for her peers to become well-rounded medical school candidates. As treasurer of the *Neuroboricuas* chapter, she audits membership receipts, dues, and club transactions accurately, increases club awareness through member recruitment and ensures officers are updated with club transactions. These actions showed me that Ana is a person with initiative, who

cares about her peers and is not afraid of creating opportunities for others and herself. I am the current moderator of NeuroBoricuas PUCPR and I have seen Ana coordinate all types of activities, including talks by well-known speakers, outreach activities, and community service. While occupying these roles in student associations, I have seen her be a leader who knows when a situation requires her to take action but she also knows when to step back and listen.

I have supervised many postdocs, graduate students, and undergraduate students, but Ana is the best student I have taught or mentored. She recently mentioned that she is now seriously considering a career as a scientist based on her experience in my lab. I am confident that she will be extremely successful in any professional career she embarks. Her impressive academic record also reflects her strong work ethic and dedication. I am confident that the opportunity to create her own research proposal will allow her to continue developing her knowledge and skills as a young scientist. I look forward and I am honored to assist her in this journey. I fully support Ana's application, and I hope she will be granted the Health Research scholarship.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if further information is needed.



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