

November 3, 2021

Dear Dr. Delbert Oberteuffer Scholarship Selection Committee:

I am honored to write this letter of recommendation on behalf of **Ms. Onyenefu (Elizabeth) Obekpa**, B. Pharm, MPH, who is applying to the Dr. Delbert Oberteuffer Scholarship. Elizabeth is a fourth-year doctoral student in the Health Promotion and Health Education at the University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston (UTHealth) School of Public Health (SPH). As her academic advisor, I have known her for over four years, since her initial inquiries about the program at UTHealth. From our very first conversation, I was impressed by Elizabeth's genuine commitment to making a difference in the lives of children and youth living in low-resource communities. She is excelling in our doctoral program and I am confident that she has the intellect and maturity to become an outstanding leader for youth-focused health education and health promotion.

Elizabeth came to UTHealth with extensive practice-based experience in public health in her home country, Nigeria. After receiving her MPH degree in 2014 from the University of Leeds, United Kingdom, Elizabeth returned home to serve as a Strategic Information Associate for the Catholic Caritas Foundation of Nigeria. She provided technical support and capacity-building for community partners across Nigeria on issues related to public health, environmental protection, and best safe health practices. She coordinated data collection and evaluation activities, integrating electronic medical records data to generate evaluation reports. She also served as the strategic information liaison between the Foundation, CDC Nigeria, and the Government of Nigeria, at the state and national levels. These and prior community-health related experiences motivated her to enroll in the doctoral program at UTHealth SPH to further develop her knowledge and skills in public health, specifically in the development of health promotion interventions benefitting women and girls.

Elizabeth has demonstrated outstanding performance and intellectual ability in her academic career. Her MPH thesis focused on sex and gender inequalities in HIV, and comprised a review of the association between antiretroviral therapy and sexual risk behaviors of people living with HIV (PLWHIV) in Nigeria, earning her the John Griffiths Prize for academic achievement at the University of Leeds. She was awarded an Outstanding New Student Scholarship into the doctoral program at UTHealth, and began working as a Graduate Research Assistant (GRA) in her first semester, assisting faculty in data collection, data analysis and manuscript writing related to substance use and HIV prevention among sexual and gender minority individuals. She will focus on these areas for her dissertation research, with relevance for future prevention and policy recommendations both for the US and Nigeria.

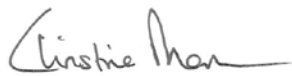
Elizabeth is excelling in her academic program at UTHealth, maintaining **3.9 GPA** and taking a rigorous course load in health promotion and health education, with certificates in Maternal and Child Health, Global Health, and Health Disparities. **She has completed over 6 credit hours in our**

doctoral program. Her training includes courses in Intervention Mapping, community based participatory research (CBPR), dissemination and implementation science, and working with diverse populations. Focusing on youth, she has culturally adapted an evidence-based adolescent HIV, STI, and pregnancy prevention curriculum developed in the U.S., *It's Your Game...Keep It Real*, for future implementation with youth in Nigeria. Her commitment to adolescent girls and young women in Nigeria is also highlighted in her volunteer work with Mayday Specialist Hospital and Caritas Nigeria as a Pharmacist and Health Educator. Through this organization, she has conducted outreach to remote villages and refugee camps. She has provided group-based sexual and reproductive health education to internally displaced girls and women of child-bearing age, their partners, and refugee camp caretakers. She has also distributed male condoms, female hygiene products, and mama packs, and provided treatment and referral for diseases such as malaria, HIV and Hepatitis. This level of commitment to providing health education and health promotion for youth is directly aligned with the spirit of Dr. Oberteuffer's legacy.

Above all, Elizabeth is a delight to work with. She possesses exceptional interpersonal skills and English oral/written language skills. Highly dependable, she exudes enthusiasm, calmness, and maturity that puts everyone at ease. She is a pleasure to have in class and in our Department, and I am confident that upon graduation, she will return to a position of influence in her home country. I am also aware that the pursuit of doctoral studies as an international student is putting a huge financial burden on Elizabeth. Receipt of the Dr. Delbert Oberteuffer Scholarship would provide additional financial support to help Elizabeth succeed in her future career directions.

In summary, I have no doubt that Elizabeth has the goals, motivation, intellect, leadership ability, and maturity to become an outstanding leader in health promotion and health education. I strongly encourage you to consider her for the award. If I can provide any further information, please do not hesitate to contact me at (713) 500-9646 or Christine.Markham@uth.tmc.edu.

Sincerely,



Christine Markham, PhD
Professor and Interim Department Chair
Department of Health Promotion & Behavioral Sciences