



September 15, 2023

To Whom It May Concern:

Please accept this nomination of Taylor Levy for the *Dr. Mary K. Beyrer Graduate Student Scholarship*. I have known Taylor for over four years having served as her instructor, academic advisor, and thesis chair during her graduate studies, as well as a public health colleague for the past two years. Taylor successfully completed her thesis and graduated with a Master of Science in Public Health Education and Promotion in May 2021. She is now enrolled at the University of Texas School of Public Health pursuing a Ph.D. in Health Promotion and Behavioral Sciences. In addition to being a truly excellent graduate student, Taylor has already distinguished herself as a leader and innovator early in her career. It is my sincere belief that she is a worthy nominee for this award.

While Taylor has now progressed into her doctoral program, I think it is appropriate that I share some of Taylor's success as a graduate student and graduate assistant at Texas State University while she pursued her master's degree. Taylor first joined our program in 2019 after receiving her undergraduate degree in nutrition from Texas State University and completing the highly competitive dietetic internship from Oregon State University. She successfully acquired her Registered Dietitian license but wanted to continue her education in the discipline of public health due to her interests in health-focused research. She immediately became not only one of our most academically successful students, but one who was highly engaged in campus and community health efforts. She joined our local chapter of Eta Sigma Gamma, the national health education honor's society, and quickly became Vice President. After one year in that role, she took over as President and has led our students in the development, implementation, and evaluation of multiple community health programs. Part of her responsibility as an officer in the organization was to manage program data collection and develop the annual activity evaluation reports. These reports are used by the national office to examine local chapter successes. As evidence of Taylor's successful leadership, our chapter was awarded the 2020 Service Activity Award (Nutrition Education Program), 2020 Teaching Activity Award (Sexual Health Education Program), 2021 Service Activity Award (Nutrition Education Program), and 2021 Chapter Recognition Award at the national Eta Sigma Gamma conference.

In Taylor's early career as a graduate student at Texas State University, she also became involved in a collaborative evaluation project with two local school districts in central Texas. She worked with local School Health Advisory Councils (SHAC) from two central Texas districts to administer and analyze data from the Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS). This data is used as part of the SHAC's overall assessment of behavioral risks and evaluation of school health programs. Taylor was the lead consultant in charge of survey administration, data analysis, and report development as she worked with the San Marcos Consolidated Independent School District in fall 2019. She also assisted with a second school district YRBS administration and data analysis in spring 2020. This experience

HEALTH AND HUMAN PERFORMANCE

601 University Drive | Jowers Center, A116 | San Marcos, Texas 78666

phone: 512.245.2561 | fax: 512.245.8678 | WWW.TXSTATE.EDU

This letter is an electronic communication from Texas State University, a member of The Texas State University System.

has introduced Taylor to the concepts of community collaborations, as well as data management for evaluation. This early experience with collaborative public health projects indicates Taylor's understanding of the importance of public health networking. She has already demonstrated advanced skills in program development, evaluation, research, and community capacity-building.

Taylor has also demonstrated excellent skills as a public health scholar and researcher. Her research has focused on the impact of COVID-19 on food security among young adults. She has presented outcomes of her research at the 2021 American Academy of Health Behavior Conference and the 2022 Society for Public Health Education Conference. Additionally, her research has been published in peer-reviewed journals including the *Health Education Monograph* and the *Journal of American College Health*. She was honored with the 2022 Mohammad R. Torabi Best Paper Award by the *Health Education Monograph*. Throughout her early career, Taylor has eagerly addressed all the challenges that accompany behavioral research and frequently expressed her enthusiasm for the process. It should also be mentioned that Taylor already has some experience with grantsmanship. She received internal funding through Texas State University's competitive Graduate College Thesis Research Fellowship to support her thesis project. She also has submitted an external grant application to support her work at our local Hays County Food Bank.

Taylor is a Registered Dietitian Nutritionist who worked for the Travis County AgriLife Extension Service as a County Extension Agent for Urban Youth Development prior to enrolling in her doctoral program. Specifically, she served as the 4-H Capital Program Director and sought to inspire youth to develop into life-long participants in science, service, and community engagement. She worked with different 4-H programs on initiatives such as gardening, natural resources, engineering & technology, and animal science. Utilizing the skills of a Certified Health Education Specialist, Taylor oversaw the 4-H program to ensure proper implementation of programming strategies and guidelines. This position allowed Taylor to pursue her interest and passion for youth development and adolescent health. This practical community health experience has certainly informed her pursuit of doctoral studies at the University of Texas School of Public.

As a graduate student, Taylor Levy has been highly engaged; she has been a leader; and she has enthusiastically collaborated in various public health initiatives. I have absolutely no reservations about recommending Taylor for the *Dr. Mary K. Beyrer Graduate Student Scholarship*. She is a highly deserving candidate. Should you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at 512-245-2947 or ronwilliams@txstate.edu.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Ron Williams, Jr.".

Ronald Williams, Jr., PhD, CHES®, CPH
Professor and Graduate Coordinator of Public Health
Chair, Department of Health and Human Performance
Texas State University