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Anders Group Healthcare Scholarship

Stanford University

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At the age of 16, my grandmother immigrated to the United States with my grandfather, believing that starting a family in the U.S. would ease the hardships of future generations. Despite that hope, she faced significant health risks, including complications from early pregnancy. Knowing her experience has profoundly shaped my decision to pursue a career in medicine, specifically to serve individuals like herself who face barriers to receiving care. As a first-generation Guatemalan-Spanish American, I am passionate about advocating for individuals who continuously face health disparities, especially those in minority and immigrant communities. Being raised in a bilingual household, I interpreted for my grandparents during their medical appointments. I had to make sure that my loved ones fully understood the health information being given to them. Having done this, I can say it is extremely important for patients to understand health-related topics, especially when they relate to their health. As the oldest granddaughter, I have a responsibility to care for my family.

Being exposed to medical environments as a result of my mother working in hospitals in Rhode Island has also influenced my interest in the medical field. My mother, a full-time medical assistant for Brown University Health, works long shifts to provide for our family. As the oldest daughter, I stepped into the role of a second caregiver. While my mother worked, I sat beside my grandparents in exam rooms and did my best to bridge the gap between two worlds: English-speaking healthcare providers and Spanish-speaking patients. These early experiences

with the medical field further influenced my desire to become a medical professional. Witnessing both my mother work tirelessly and the resilience of my grandparents, who left their home country for opportunity, gave me a deep appreciation for healthcare work, bilingualism, and the unseen labor of medical professionals. Today, I am a proud rising sophomore at Stanford University, pursuing a Bachelor of Science in Human Biology on the Pre-Physician Assistant track as the daughter of an immigrant family.

Having the opportunity to be the first in my family to attend college has allowed me to continue the work I did as a young girl. At Stanford, I serve as a Spanish Interpreter for the university's Cardinal Free Clinics—two student-run clinics that provide free primary and specialty care to uninsured and underinsured individuals in the Bay Area. On weekends, I interpret medical conversations between providers and non-English-speaking patients. I will return to this role during my second year, dedicating over 14 volunteer hours weekly.

My desire to pursue a medical career does not end there. Following my freshman year, I returned to Rhode Island—and to the spirit of service that raised me. Through the Brown University Health Summer Internship Program, I am interning at Hasbro Children's Hospital's Partial Hospital Program (PHP) as a Mental Health Worker Assistant, supervised by Dr. Jack Nassau, PhD, a clinical psychologist. PHP supports patients ages 5 to 18 across three therapeutic milieus—those navigating complex psychiatric conditions, including anxiety, depression, trauma-related disorders, eating disorders, and functional neurological disorder (FND).

At the start of my internship, I was unsure whether I had the emotional resilience to complete my duties. As someone who feels deeply, I worried I might become overwhelmed by the stories and needs of young patients. That fear became real when I met a patient diagnosed with Avoidant/Restrictive Food Intake Disorder (ARFID). When they first arrived at PHP, they

were severely underweight, refusing all food but french fries (their safe food) and avoiding eye contact and conversation. At PHP, I have had the privilege of building a one-on-one connection with this child; with encouragement, they began trying new foods—applesauce, chicken, milk, yogurt, and cheese. I remember celebrating the smallest of bites taken from these foods. I watched them begin to smile, participate in group activities, and become more lively with others within the milieu. Alongside the support of long-time staff, I witnessed this patient gain five pounds; their transformation—physically, emotionally, and socially—has been one of the most beautiful things I have seen. This case in particular reminded me of my own younger sisters, and I found myself calling them in tears one lunch break, overcome with gratitude for their health and well-being.

This patient trusted me, laughed with me, and taught me what it truly means to be present for someone along their treatment. They reminded me why I want to become a Physician Assistant—not to simply wear a title, but to serve, support, and stand alongside those who are often overlooked. Working within the field, I have come to note that allied health professionals, from medical assistants to mental health workers, are the backbone of our healthcare systems. These individuals are some of many in the field who are often the most frequent point of contact for patients; they interpret, advocate, and comfort their patients. For immigrant, working-class, Spanish-speaking families like mine, these professionals are essential. Without bilingual staff, my grandparents would not have received adequate care, and without my mother, many patients would not have felt seen or heard.

To uplift these critical workers, we must invest in language access, mental health support, career pathways, and pay equity. Cultural competency training is not an option, but is necessary.

The invisible labor of allied health professionals must be acknowledged and supported, especially in emotionally intense fields like behavioral health.

Attending Stanford—3,000 miles from home—has given me the space and time to reflect on the sacrifices my family has made to get me here. My grandparents immigrated to the U.S. to rewrite our future. My mother worked days, nights, and weekends so I could pursue my dreams. Today, I carry their love, labor, and language to every clinic, patient interaction, and every step I take to become a healthcare provider. Healthcare changed my life for the better, and I want to return that gift by becoming a provider who listens, speaks, and advocates for their patients.