

## SAMPLES OF ADVOCATE LETTER OF SUPPORT FORMAT & VERBIAGE

Researcher, M.D.  
Title(s)  
Department(s)  
Institution, City, State

Date

Dear Dr. Researcher,

### SAMPLE OF INTRODUCTORY PARAGRAPHS:

1

It is my great pleasure to offer this letter of strongest possible support for Dr. Researcher in her application for the Career Development Award in Breast Cancer. I have come to know Dr. Researcher and her work through my involvement with the UNC Cancer Outcomes Research Program and my work as a research patient advocate for the Lineberger Comprehensive Cancer Center.

2

I am pleased to serve as the patient advocate for your Department of Defense-sponsored Breast Cancer Research Program Transformative Breast Cancer Consortium Award proposal titled, "*TITLE OF APPLICATION.*"

3

I am writing to indicate my enthusiastic support for your proposal "*TITLE OF APPLICATION*" that will examine ways to exploit targeting the progesterone receptor (PR) in hormone receptor positive (HR+) breast cancer to overcome tumor immunosuppression and finally allow for immunotherapeutic targeting of HR+ breast cancer.

### SAMPLES OF ADVOCACY EXPERIENCE

1

I am currently an active advocate for breast cancer research and clinical trials. I am devoted to science and have a Bachelor's of Science degree in biology/microbiology and extensive laboratory experience in molecular biology. I am also an over 20-year survivor of breast cancer. The inquisitive nature of being a scientist and having an understanding of scientific concepts along with my personal experience through cancer treatment (including 2 clinical trials) fits well with being a breast cancer research advocate. I was

formerly the Chair of the Komen Advocates in Science Steering Committee and Komen Scholar. I am currently Associate Group Chair for Advocacy for the NCI NCTN Alliance for Clinical Trials in Oncology where I also serve as Chair of the Patient Advocate Committee and member of the Breast Cancer Committee. At the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, I serve as the Chair for the Lineberger Patient Advocates for Research Council and for the UNC Breast SPORE advocates. My goal through breast cancer research advocacy is to further my contribution into the conduct of research as well as the design and implementation of clinical trials that brings the best research to the clinic to benefit breast cancer patients.

## **SAMPLES ABOUT THE RESEARCH**

1

As you know, I attended your talk at the Alliance for Clinical Trials in Oncology Cancer Care Delivery Research Committee meeting in May 2019. You described your project, and its importance was immediately clear to me. I am a breast cancer survivor and I see how the emotional bond between a breast cancer survivor and an oncologist may make it challenging for care to shift from oncology providers to primary care providers. But I also appreciate that caring for breast cancer survivors indefinitely means that oncologists will lack the capacity to care for new cancer patients. To ensure that active breast cancer patients have timely access to treatment, your intervention is critical. It is also critical to ensure that the implementation of your intervention is planned and carry out in such a way that the quality of care that breast cancer survivors have come to expect from UNC Health Care System cancer programs is maintained. Preparation of survivors for this transition is complex and your study addresses many considerations. Involving myself and other breast cancer patients in your study will ensure the results will be meaningful and more likely acceptable to patients; addressing concerns they may raise during the conduct of this study. For this reason, I am very pleased that you reached out to me to serve as a co-investigator on the proposed study.

2

Dr. Researcher's proposal highlights an unmet need in breast cancer research. At some point in their treatment, patients with metastatic breast cancer want to know "how much time do I have" and look to their oncologist to provide an accurate estimate of their prognosis. The new model created by Dr. Researcher and her colleagues will provide a way for oncologists to provide this needed information based on real-world data. Patients often wrestle with decisions about whether to continue cancer care after multiple lines of treatment. The added information provided by the new model being evaluated in this study will equip oncologists, patients with metastatic breast cancer, and their families with one tool to help guide those difficult choices.

It is clear that Dr. Researcher is committed to improving outcomes for patients with advanced breast cancer. I am thrilled to offer my support for her proposal, as I think this study will positively affect the care of patients with metastatic breast cancer by guiding end of life care decisions using an accurate prognostic model.

3

Working within a consortium that spans many different areas of research, each bringing a unique expertise, gives me confidence that this approach will be successful to develop targeted therapies for breast cancer. Many times research groups only look at one aspect of breast cancer; however having the ability to learn from each other and share ideas and resources among the consortium groups adds a new dimension to this research project. I have worked with your group for many years and have an interest in immunotherapy for breast cancer being a recipient of an early HER2 vaccine in 2000. I am looking forward to the new direction and added information that you will learn through your proposed project. Particularly adding in newer targets and therapies. We are still struggling with how to target the immune system in breast cancer, so this work will be foundational to move this area forward. I have also worked with Dr. Researcher for many years and I am looking forward to being on the team.

4

The project within this proposal is unique and is based on your novel findings of PR involvement in mediating immunosuppression in HR+ BC, as well as your pioneering work in vaccination against breast cancer (which has already established ongoing clinical trials for HER2 and ESR1 vaccines). Your past experiences demonstrating the effectiveness of vaccines targeting these antigens are very exciting. The future clinical testing of a vaccine that could allow for immunotherapeutic targeting of HR+ BC, as well as the use of available progesterone receptor antagonists, could lead to a significant reduction in metastases and allow people to live longer with metastatic disease. The development of this new viral vaccine will also benefit from the improvements you have developed in the course of your other vaccine studies, which have already demonstrated some clinical responsiveness in early clinical trials of breast cancer. As a participant and someone who has potentially benefited from a past clinical trial testing a HER2 vaccine, I am enthusiastic about this approach, which would broadly target multiple types of resistance with a relatively cheap and painless series of vaccines. Combining this targeting with progesterone receptor antagonists promises to further strengthen this approach, which would enable effective immune targeting in HR+ breast cancer. This work is important to many breast cancer patients and has the potential to be an exciting and effective new way to treat metastatic HR positive breast cancer, which account for the majority of breast cancer deaths.

#### **SAMPLES OF INTERACTION WITH THE RESEARCHER**

1

Dr. Researcher sought my input regarding her proposal for this award. She clearly recognizes the importance of engaging patients and families in breast cancer research, and she formally plans to solicit the input of patients and families in Aim 2 of her proposal. She understands that discussion of end of life issues is delicate and that development of prognostic tools should be done with an understanding of how the information might be received by patients and families. By taking this innovative approach to include patients and families in the implementation of her prognostic tool, Dr. Researcher will undoubtedly, identify ways to increase its acceptability among patients with metastatic breast cancer.

## SAMPLES OF YOUR ROLE IF THE PROJECT IS FUNDED

1

I look forward to meeting with you and your scientific team throughout the project. I have known you and worked with you and members of your laboratory for many years. I have also worked with Dr. Researcher (co-PI) for many years. I plan to participate in regular meetings and learn more during the conduct of your research. I will contribute to your research project by ensuring the outcome of your research will indeed benefit patients and can be translated to improve patient care. I will make sure that by keeping the patient perspective and impact at the forefront of your research, the project will be interesting and important to patients and the public. I can help communicate the importance of your research and key findings to the community by giving presentation to local breast cancer organizations. Having worked with you in the past and discussed your project with you, I can enthusiastically recommend my support for the funding of this project.

2

I plan to contribute and attend executive committee meeting to continue input on collaborations and communication among the consortium members. I am looking forward to getting to know the other members and their research. I will also meet with you and your research team on a regular basis, to keep up with ongoing progress of the research. I always enjoy your laboratory team meetings at Duke and the interaction and contribution of all members, including consumer advocates. As you know, I volunteer for multiple breast cancer organizations and am always willing to speak about new research to young researchers, other consumer advocates and the public. I can help translate your project into plain language to facilitate the dissemination of the results.

3

For the proposed study, we have agreed that I will meet with you, other investigators, and participating providers prior to implementation to consider, to the extent possible, the consequences of changing workflow to integrate the intervention into daily practice for providers. I will also meet with you and other co-investigators for an hour during each month of the proposed study to discuss preliminary findings from the perspective of a breast cancer survivor. Importantly, as appropriate, I will connect you with the UNC Lineberger patient advocate groups to ensure diversity in the perspectives necessary to ensure the patient voice is included, to enhance the overall understanding of its effectiveness and implementation. I believe that these activities will provide critical perspectives needed to ensure that it is responsive to survivors' needs while promoting a shift in the way that they receive care.

## SAMPLE CLOSING PARAGRAPHS

1

It is clear that Dr. Researcher is committed to improving outcomes for patients with advanced breast cancer. I am thrilled to offer my support for her proposal, as I think this study will positively affect the care of patients with metastatic breast cancer by guiding end of life care decisions using an accurate prognostic model.

I look forward to collaborating with you, continuing this important work.

2

I am so excited to be a part of this consortium of expert researchers and consumer advocates. I think this project has an excellent chance to succeed and improve the lives of many breast cancer patients. Stopping the trajectory of breast cancer, keeping it from spreading and progressing will ultimately result in patients living longer. I am looking forward to contributing in a meaningful way.

3

Once again, I fully support the proposed work and am very pleased to serve as a co-investigator, adding the necessary perspective of breast cancer survivors.

Thank you for the opportunity to collaborate on this important work. Please feel free to contact me with any questions or concerns.

Sincerely,



Patricia (Patty) Spears  
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Chair, UNC Lineberger Patient Advocates for Research Council  
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