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Molecular Genetic Pathology Fellowship Selection Committee
Washington University in Saint Louis
Department of Pathology & Immunology
Saint Louis, Missouri

Dear Members of the Fellowship Selection Committee:

I am writing to offer my strongest recommendation for **Lisa Chen, MD** as an applicant to the Molecular Genetic Pathology Fellowship Program at Washington University in Saint Louis. I serve as Associate Professor of Pathology and Medical Director of the Molecular Pathology Laboratory at the University of Chicago Medicine, where I oversee clinical genomic testing and train residents and fellows in assay validation, variant interpretation, and laboratory operations. I have worked with many excellent trainees in molecular diagnostics, and Dr. Chen stands out for her combination of analytic rigor, practical judgment, and steady professionalism.

I first met Dr. Chen during her AP/CP residency at Massachusetts General Hospital, when she arranged a four-week visiting elective with our molecular diagnostics service to broaden her exposure to high-complexity oncology testing and laboratory operations. I later worked with her again through a multi-institutional quality improvement effort focused on tumor-only NGS reporting practices. Across these settings I observed her on-service case work, report drafting, direct consultation with clinicians, and collaborative committee-style work that required discipline and follow-through.

From the start of her elective, Dr. Chen demonstrated a rare ability to connect technical details to clinical decisions. She learned our NGS workflows quickly and presented cases with a clear, structured approach: confirming specimen adequacy and tumor fraction, recognizing assay limitations, and then framing results in language that clinicians could act on. When questions arose about borderline calls, she consistently went beyond the minimum by reviewing read-level evidence, checking quality metrics, and proposing appropriate orthogonal testing when needed. Her case presentations were concise, accurate, and clinically oriented.

A representative example involved a small lung biopsy in which an EGFR exon 20 insertion was detected near the assay's limit of detection. Dr. Chen independently assessed the raw data, considered potential artifacts related to specimen quality, and drafted a report comment that balanced analytic transparency with clinical utility. Her wording explained the level of confidence, the possibility of sampling effects, and the implications for targeted therapy discussions without overstatement. The ordering oncologist later remarked that it was among the clearest interpretations they had received for a challenging near-threshold result.

Dr. Chen also impressed me with her systems-level thinking. Midway through her rotation, she noticed that acceptance criteria for a recently modified microsatellite instability (MSI) assay were applied

correctly in practice but not perfectly aligned across the change-control record, validation summary, and standard operating procedure. Without being asked, she mapped the inconsistencies, proposed harmonized language that preserved regulatory intent, and created a streamlined template our laboratory adopted for subsequent assay updates. This kind of proactive, quality-minded approach is uncommon at her stage of training and speaks to her potential as a future laboratory leader.

Equally important, Dr. Chen is an excellent communicator and collaborator. In a molecular tumor board discussion, she addressed concerns about clonal hematopoiesis confounding by explaining the concept in plain language, outlining how we evaluate it analytically, and proposing a concrete reflex-testing plan. She followed up promptly with technologists to confirm specimen availability and turnaround time, then sent a concise summary to the clinical team. She also teaches naturally; during her elective she led brief teaching sessions for junior residents on variant classification frameworks and common pitfalls in tumor-only testing. Colleagues consistently sought her input because she is both clear and collegial.

Dr. Chen's background - MD from Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine, AP/CP residency at Massachusetts General Hospital (Harvard Medical School), and her current Surgical Pathology Fellowship at Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center - positions her extremely well for advanced training in molecular genetic pathology. She already demonstrates the habits of a strong future molecular pathologist: integrating morphologic and clinical context, respecting assay performance characteristics, communicating limitations transparently, and maintaining a patient-centered focus even in technically complex situations.

I recommend Dr. Chen without reservation. She has the intellect, work ethic, and interpersonal judgment to thrive in your program and to develop into an exceptional molecular genetic pathologist. I am confident she will contribute meaningfully to your clinical service, teaching mission, and scholarly community. Please feel free to contact me if I can provide any additional information.

Sincerely,

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