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To whom it may concern,

It is with great enthusiasm that I submit my interest to Cora Services for a school counseling position. Through my previous employment, graduate training, and field placements, I have come to believe that working at the intersection of education and mental health is critical for the advancement of equity in our society. I hope to bring my passionate and intentional take on school counseling and leadership to a Philadelphia school. I am a proud graduate of Philadelphia schools and I chose to return to Philadelphia for graduate school because I wanted to serve a population that I feel strongly connected to. I am already a certified Pennsylvania K-12 school counselor and will be eligible to be a licensed professional counselor in a few years.

My post-college path has led me to this juncture: I have taught English in France, served as a summer camp administrator and teen leadership curriculum developer, written technical articles for a government agency, and hiked 1000 miles by myself on the Appalachian Trail. While they have been varied, each of these experiences illuminated my values and developed a skill set that has served me well as I pursue counseling.

As a counselor, I envision that my role is to identify and amplify student strengths and growth opportunities in addition to removing barriers to academic success and emotional development. I plan to do this by promoting a trauma-informed, collaborative working environment that invites all members of the school community, including students, parents, teachers, and administrators, to work towards this shared goal in ways that make use of their unique strengths. I believe that school communities are built on relationships, connection, and mutual goals and values.

My graduate classes at Penn have given me a strong theoretical understanding of adolescent psychology and its application to school counseling. My primary theoretical orientation is person-centered therapy with an emphasis on building trust and inspiring change through strong relationships. I am adept at identifying underlying needs behind maladaptive behavior and working with clients to identify strategies to meet those needs in a functional way. I am comfortable applying a variety of therapeutic orientations to a school setting. I have been able to apply these interventions at my two SDP field placements: Andrew Hamilton School (K-8) and Science Leadership Academy - Center City (9-12). At Hamilton, I honed my counseling skills and facilitated the high school selection process. I frequently used trauma-informed play therapy and solution-focused brief therapy to help students identify how their thoughts, feelings, and behaviors were linked.

At SLA, I found my niche as an advocate and counselor for high school students. Working closely with my supervising counselor and principals, I spearheaded projects that have enhanced the school's community-focused ethos. I delivered guidance lessons about restorative practices, mental wellness, and peer mediation. I participated in every part of the 9th grade admissions process, from interviewing students to managing our applicant database. I started an afterschool improvisational comedy club and, in general, did what I could to contribute to the functioning of the school. In between these projects I performed my favorite part of this role: providing individual counseling to students. My caseload included students whose issues range from the academic to the traumatic. I listened earnestly to students' worries and took delight as they share their exciting take on the world. I was honored to witness their journeys, expand their emotional toolbox, and connect them to external services.

I love being an all-around contributor to an educational, youth-focused community and feel prepared to contribute similarly to a Philadelphia school. I look forward to discussing my qualifications and vision for the school counselor position.

Sincerely,

Tess Liebersohn, M.Ed.