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Dear I-Kuan Tao Chong-De School,

It is with great pleasure that I write in support of Naomi Fastovsky's application to the Chong-De School, which will be an essential aspect of her Harvard project entitled "Traversing Territory: Transnational Community Building in Yiguandao." I am currently serving as Naomi's academic advisor for the degree she is pursuing in the MTS program. Naomi came to Harvard as an exceptionally strong applicant in the East Asian religions program at the Divinity School after completing her BA at Reed College, where she received excellent foundational training in East Asian studies and acquired excellent language training. I have taught Naomi in a graduate seminar and found her to be an excellent student who is exceptionally organized, conscientious, and brimming with fresh and innovative ideas.

Naomi's work on Yiguandao aims to study its origins in China, and its subsequent spread to Taiwan, Southeast Asia, and to the US and Europe. While there has been some research done on the organization in China and Taiwan, Naomi's work is innovative in the ways she directs her focus to the international spread of the movement. It is precisely the issue of how Yiguandao reconfigured itself as a global movement and how the tradition conceives of itself in a transnational context that is the focus of Naomi's work. In order to carry out this project she needs to conduct ethnographic work in the communities where Yiguandao spread. During the period of COVID restrictions she focused on those areas where research was feasible, including work on the Boston branch of the Chong-De School of Yiguandao. Now that COVID restrictions are beginning to ease she is poised to move to the most essential phase of her research, which is to travel to Taiwan to study at the Chong-De School itself.

I fully support Naomi's application and hope she will be able to carry out her studies in Taiwan. Thank you very much for your consideration and please feel free to contact me if you have any further questions.

Sincerely,

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