Neili Carolina Bermúdez Plaza
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MOTIVATION LETTER

May 30th, 2026

Dear Members of the Selection Committee,

I am pleased to apply for the Mentoring Program on Aging and Health Economics Research organized by NBER with support from the National Institute of Aging. As a second-year PhD student in the Humanities and Social Sciences of Medicine and Health supervised by Prof. Mauricio Avendano (FBM-UNIL) and Prof. Jürgen Maurer (HEC-UNIL), I am particularly drawn to this program due to its emphasis on aging, health economics, and demographics, as a commitment to provide evidence-based contributions on population aging. I am especially attracted by the opportunity to strengthen my empirical toolkit and engage with cutting-edge research through close interaction with leading scholars in the field. This aligns closely with my doctoral research agenda. In particular, I would like guidance on formulating rigorous research questions relevant to public policy regarding the long-term effects of childhood deprivation, with a special focus on gender disparities in mental health and human capital outcomes among middle-aged and older adults. I am also eager to expand my experience with the Gateway to Global Aging Data Center and leverage its extensive harmonized datasets, which cover the United States, Europe, and some low-and middle-income countries.

Since the beginning of my career, I have been committed to advancing evidence-based social policies to improve outcomes for vulnerable populations, including older adults, children, and women. As a social protection and labor market consultant at the Inter-American Development Bank, I contributed to research and policy initiatives to enhance the well-being of low-income populations in the Latin American and Caribbean region. I also worked at the World Bank, where I supported the development of the Global DigiHealth Platform, an initiative designed to foster digital health transformation in emerging countries. In addition, I co-led the design of a baseline tool to assess the maturity of national health and immunization systems as part of the Pan-American Health Organization/WHO response to the COVID-19 pandemic. These experiences have strengthened my analytical, policy, and communication skills.

I would be honored to join this mentorship cohort and contribute to a stimulating intellectual environment. I would like to further my methodological skills and engage in interdisciplinary discussion at the intersection of the economics of ageing, demography, mental health, and life-course research. I look forward to both learning from and contributing to this vibrant research community.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

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EDUCATION & GRANTS

Université de Lausanne, Lausanne, Switzerland — **February 2025 – Present**

- **PhD in the Humanities and Social Sciences of Medicine and Health (2nd Year)**
  - *Dissertation:* Gender Inequalities in Health and Human Capital Across the Life Course: Three cross-national studies supervised by Prof. Mauricio Avendano (Faculty of Biology and Medicine) and Prof. Jürgen Maurer (Faculty of Economics)
  - *PhD Courses:* Principles of Health Economics, Health Inequality, Health Equity in Chaotic Times, Causal Analysis, Empirical Health and Labor Economics, Identification of Questionnaires and Rating Scales for Health Research.

Universidad de Los Andes, Bogotá, Colombia — **March 2017**

- **Master's degree in Public Policy**
  - *Research project:* Factors Associated with the Quality of School Management Practices: Empirical analysis for Colombia
  - *Teaching Assistant:* Health Economics and Economic Analysis of Public Policies
  - *Grants:* Scholarship to pursue a Master's degree in Public Policy (Beca "Escuela de Gobierno"), 2015-2017

Universidad Icesi, Cali, Colombia — **August 2013**

- **Bachelor's degree in Economics and International Business**
  - *Research Assistant:* Consultancy projects at the Centre for Research in Economics and Finance (CIENFI)
  - *Teaching Assistant:* Microeconomics and Market Research Analysis
  - *Grants:* Scholarship to pursue a bachelor's degree (Beca "Gases de Occidente S.A."), 2008-2013

RESEARCH INTERESTS

Gender Inequalities, Public Health, Quantitative analysis and impact evaluation, Life-Course Perspective, Health Economics, Human Capital Accumulation

RESEARCH AND TEACHING EXPERIENCE

Inter-American Development Bank, Washington D.C., USA — **June 2023 – Present**

Social Protection and Labor Market Division Consultant

- Provide technical as research assistant to support the design of conditional and unconditional cash transfers in vulnerable communities for children, women head of households, and elders in Latin American and Caribbean (LAC)
- Support the setting up and carried out data analysis to develop a choice questionnaire aimed at understanding the behavioural response and trusty levels in public health information disseminated by international and national authorities to achieve adherence to contact tracing apps in 10 LAC countries during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Conduct literature review related to coping strategies and mechanisms used by vulnerable households due to shocks (i.e. COVID-19, violence, and climate events) to support the dissemination of best practices and lessons learned in the region.

Universidad de los Andes, Bogotá, Colombia — **Feb 2015 – Nov 2016**

Graduate Research and Teaching Assistant

- Conducted literature review, structured interviews, focus groups, fieldwork supervision, and data analysis to examine management practices of public-school principals in adverse contexts in Colombia through the analysis of 300+ surveys.
- Supported discussion sections and tutorials of 20+ graduate students at the School of Government in two coursework: Health Economics and Economic Analysis of Public Policies. Planned lessons and activities, graded reports, and provided comments.
- Supported Principal Investigators in managing and drafting grant proposals for funding competitions from the National Ministry of Education and the Administrative Department of Science, Technology, and Innovation.

Lumni Research S.A., Bogotá, Colombia — **March 2014 – June 2015**

Junior Researcher

- Facilitated literature review and data analysis related to labour and educational markets in Latin America (Mexico, Colombia, Peru, and Chile) to elaborate forecasting models of graduates in different disciplines.
- Provide technical inputs to elaborate reports related to the high school system education and the labour market in the region.

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

International Finance Corporation, Washington D.C., USA February 2022 – June 2023

External Consultant, Digital Health Transformation

- Assessed baseline surveys, data analysis, interviews, and workshops to develop roadmaps for digital transformation of companies in the life sciences industry in emerging markets.
- Advised and developed digital transformation initiatives for companies in the life sciences industry in Brazil, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Kenya, Nigeria, and Pakistan as part of consulting activities aimed at optimizing the delivery of healthcare services.

Pan-American Health Organization, Washington D.C., USA September 2021 – December 2022

International Consultant, Information Systems and Digital Health

- Co-led the execution of focus groups and the creation of a baseline questionnaire to examine the maturity level of national healthcare systems and healthcare practices among Member States in The Americas.
- Supported the development of Public-Private Partnerships to identify and strengthen gaps related to leadership, organizational structure, and management practices in healthcare systems of The Americas.

Inter-American Development Bank, Bogotá, Colombia September 2018 – September 2019

Social Protection and Health Division Consultant, Country Office

- Conducted literature review and health data analysis to create innovative strategies to improve healthcare services for vulnerable Venezuelan families in Colombia.
- Supported the fieldwork supervision of public health projects aimed to reduce malaria cases in the Pacific Coast of Colombia conducting independent policy discussions with multi-disciplinary stakeholders, national and local authorities, external donors, and other multilateral organizations. Managed an annual budget of US$3,000,000.
- Collaborated with team leaders and senior advisors in managing the document clearance process, drafted written policy-related documents, prepared donor reports, and developed high-level graphics and PowerPoint presentations.

Colombian Fund for High-Cost Diseases, Bogotá, Colombia March 2017 – March 2018

Junior Health Economist

- Computed data analysis and data fusion of large data sets related to HIV, Cancer, Chronic-kidney disease, and Haemophilia from medical records to analyse healthcare outcomes of high-cost patients in Colombia. Regularly prepared executive presentations, semi-annual reports, and policy briefs to inform health insurers and the National Ministry of Health.
- Collaborated with nurser, nutritionists, and physicians to conduct an ex-post risk analysis based on health records of patients with high-cost diseases in Colombia.

POLICY WRITINGS

- Building Adaptative Social Protection Systems in Latin America and the Caribbean, Inter-American Development Bank, (Co-authored with Ofir Marer, Alexandre Bagolle, and Luis Tejerina), August 2024. http://dx.doi.org/10.18235/0013253
- Blog Gente Saludable, Inter-American Development Bank. ¿Qué tienen en común las palomitas o los buñuelos con los estándares de interoperabilidad en salud? [In Spanish], August 2021 https://blogs.iadb.org/salud/es/interoperabilidad-salud/
- Indicadores de gestión de riesgo en pacientes con artritis reumatoide en Colombia. Cuenta de Alto Costo. [In Spanish], Mayo 2018. https://cuentadealtocosto.org/site/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/indicadores_de_gestion_de_riesgo_artritis_reumatoide.pdf
- Value in Health, Hematopoietic Cell Transplantation Facilities: Geographic Access in Colombia. (Co-authored with Uribe-Parra et al.). [Poster presented at ISPOR], October 2017 https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jval.2017.08.2605

CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS

- Speaker at the Management International Conference, Monastier di Treviso – Italy, May 2017 http://www.hippocampus.si/ISBN/978-961-7023-12-1/69.pdf

SKILLS AND INTERESTS

Statistical Packages Stata, R, NVivo, LaTex, and Microsoft Office Suite

Online training JPAL101x: Evaluating Social Programs, MITx on edX, August 2020

Languages Spanish (native), English (fluent), Portuguese & French (intermediate)