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Board of Directors, Foundation for the Advancement of Health Education  
Dr. Becky J. Smith Scholarship

December 29, 2022

Dear Board of Directors,

I am delighted to write a letter of recommendation on behalf of Tala Najjar, who is applying for the Becky J. Smith Scholarship award. I confirm that Tala is a senior in our department and has a 3.98 GPA. I am also familiar with Tala's skills and interests through my role as her professor and mentor.

Tala is an extremely bright, focused, and hard-working scholar who has a clear vision about her future. I saw Tala's academic aptitude first-hand when she was a student in my undergraduate epidemiology course. My class is quite rigorous and involves completion of quizzes, homeworks, visual assignments, and exams focusing on epidemiologic concepts and algebraic calculations. From the start of the semester, Tala demonstrated mastery of the course content and was 1 of the top 3 students in my class. Tala stands out as one of the most talented students I have had the pleasure of teaching in the span of my 15+ year career. It was evident from her level of participation that she enjoyed the challenges the course entailed and worked hard to master concepts. In fact, I lament that my university does not offer an 'A+' grade option because Tala certainly deserved this final grade.

After completing my class, Tala remained in touch because of her interest in participating in research opportunities involving health disparities projects. In class, I often use examples from my own research program on the social determinants of health and immigrant disparities to solidify concepts. Tala was excited about the application of epidemiology in real-world projects, and in the Spring 2023, she will serve as an intern under a project with a local collaborator (Cone Health) to understand how we can use digital referral systems to promote health promotion strategies for adults living with diabetes. I know she will bring important insights to this work.

In summary, Tala would be an outstanding recipient of the Dr. Becky J. Smith scholarship award. In addition to her intellectual depth, Tala is also an immigrant-origin young woman who stands to make important contributions to advancing the values and mission of health education to reduce inequities and advance health for all. She comes with my highest recommendations.

Sincerely,



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Sandra Echeverria, PhD, MPH  
Associate Professor