Date: December 17, 2022  
To: Dr. Becky Smith Scholarship Review Committee

Reference: Taylor Lane Letter of Support

I am delighted to write a strong and enthusiastic letter to support Taylor Lane’s application to the Dr. Becky Smith Scholarship.

I joined the University of Alabama’s department of Health Science as an Assistant Professor this Fall. Taylor took my Public Health Systems and Policy Course (HHE 380) this fall where she excelled with a final grade of A+. Taylor’s final grade in my course reflects her consistency in engaging with course materials, discussions, and meaningful contributions in the assigned group project.

HHE 380 provides students with foundational knowledge about health policy and law and public health systems. Students learn about the social determinants of health, the history of public policy, the essential services of public health and public health policy and governance. In addition to demonstrating comprehension of course material through quizzes and exams, students in HHE 380 had two additional assignments. The first assignment required students to lead a presentation summarizing a course reading and ask their fellow students questions. Taylor’s presentation was on, *Bayer, R., Johns, D. M., & Galea, S. (2012). Salt and public health: contested science and the challenge of evidencebased decision making. Health Affairs, 31(12), 2738-2746*. Taylor did a fantastic job summarizing the article and articulating the author’s main points to her classmates. Her questions to the class were well thought out and resulted in an engaging discussion about the influence of public health research and evidence on policymaking.

Students in my course were also required to work in groups to create a Health Policy Brief. Taylor worked with a group of fellow students to create a brief on food insecurity. Her group reviewed national policies to increase Supplemental Nutrition Assistant Program (SNAP) participation. Her group’s project was one of the top scoring policy briefs submitted. The group highlighted the national landscape of food insecurity among children in the United States including factors associated with food insecurity, myths and misconceptions about food insecurity, how politics influence SNAP eligibility, and federal spending on the SNAP program. The group highlighted policy solutions including, (a) incentivizing states to increase participation rates, (b) changing the SNAP benefit eligibility criteria and structure, and (c) increasing funding for food banks and summer food programs. The group highlighted pros and cons of each solution and recommended that the best policy solution was to support policies that increase participation in the SNAP program. Taylor and her group did a fantastic job of showcasing what they learned in the course in their final project. Team members were required to rate each member’s contribution to the project. Taylor received the highest marks from her team members for active participation. She was evaluated on her contribution to planning, ideas, literature review, writing sections, and contributing to the overall execution and submission of the project.

Taylor is an excellent student, and the scholarship will allow her to xxxxxx. This scholarship will be essential to contributing to Taylor’s goal of zzzz.

I highly recommend Taylor Lane for the scholarship.

Please feel free to contact me with any questions.

Sincerely,

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Rahma Mkuu, PhD, MPH, CPH

Assistant Professor she/her/hers

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