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Professor and Chair
The David Bruton, Jr. Chair in Ophthalmology

Department of Ophthalmology

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Society of Heed Fellows Board of Trustees
Heed Ophthalmic Foundation
655 Beach Street
San Francisco, CA 94109

RE: Nomination of Dr. Mohammad Bakr for the 20th Annual Heed Ophthalmic Foundation Residents Retreat

Dear Members of the Board of Trustees,

We submit this joint letter as Department Chair and Residency Program Director at the University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center to offer our enthusiastic nomination of Dr. Mohammad Bakr for the 2026 Heed Ophthalmic Foundation Residents Retreat. In our collective decades of training ophthalmologists, few residents have impressed like Mo. His path to our program is unlike any we've seen, and it speaks loudly about the kind of academician he is destined to become. Indeed, we would place him in the top 2-3% of all residents we have experienced in our combined 40 years of training residents.

Mo is an international medical graduate who trained in ophthalmology at Cairo University, one of the oldest and highest volume eye programs in the Egypt and the Middle East. He earned his master's degree with top honors, was top of his medical school class, and went on to serve as an assistant lecturer on the Cairo faculty, where he supervised residents in clinic and in the operating room. He then spent several years in private practice in Cairo managing cataract, refractive, corneal, and medical retina patients. By reasonable measures, he was a fully formed ophthalmologist before he ever set foot in Dallas.

Despite this, Mo chose to start over. He came to UT Southwestern and completed a two-year international cornea fellowship, followed by a one-year pediatric ophthalmology and strabismus fellowship. Then, remarkably, he elected to enter our residency program. This is a physician who could have been done with training long ago, but who instead pursued more preparation with the understanding that an academic career demands a higher level of commitment. In our view, that choice reveals everything about Mo's character: he is not interested in shortcuts, and he is not motivated by expediency. He wants to be excellent, and he is willing to do the hard work required to get there.

But what makes Mo truly special is his humility. Despite his more advance training and vast knowledge and skill, he is approachable and beloved by his co-residents. He approaches every rotation, every lecture, and every case with the curiosity and openness of someone who believes there is always more to learn. His

co-residents gravitate toward him for exactly this reason. He is a natural teacher who shares his considerable knowledge generously and without pretense. He elevates every team he is part of, and he does so quietly.

Mo's research output reflects the same drive. He has published in *Cornea*, the *Journal of Cataract and Refractive Surgery*, and the *Journal of AAPOS*, among others. His work on light adjustable lenses has been accepted for both oral presentation and poster at the 2026 ASCRS annual meeting, and he presented at the 2025 AAO meeting as well. His research interests span the anterior segment, pediatric ophthalmology, and refractive outcomes, and he has consistently demonstrated the ability to identify clinically meaningful questions and pursue them with rigor. Notably, he has produced this body of work while juggling the demands of a busy residency at a major safety net hospital.

His commitment to service is equally striking. At Cairo University he was part of the retinopathy of prematurity screening team, providing care to newborns at public and charitable hospitals. He participated in medical outreach programs serving underserved communities in Egypt and Syrian refugees. These were not line items on a CV. They were choices that reflected his values.

We would be remiss not to share a small anecdote that captures Mo's approach to life. During his three years of fellowship training in Dallas, Mo did not own a car, despite being responsible for covering multiple hospitals in Dallas and Ft. Worth. Anyone familiar with the Dallas-Ft. Worth metroplex knows that the public transit system is, to put it charitably, sparse. Navigating this sprawling region by bus and rail to get to hospitals, clinics, and call duties requires a level of determination that most people simply do not possess. Mo never complained about it. He never showed up late. It is a small detail, but it is illustrative of a person for whom obstacles are simply problems to be solved, not excuses to be made.

Mo's career trajectory points squarely toward academic ophthalmology. Indeed, we plan to recruit him to the UT Southwestern faculty after he completes his residency. He has the clinical breadth, research instinct, teaching temperament, and personal resilience to thrive in the academic environment. The Heed Residents Retreat would provide him with mentorship and community at exactly the right moment in his training, and we believe he would contribute enormously to the conversation among his peers. We offer this nomination with our highest and most sincere recommendation. As a former faculty participant in the Heed Residents Retreat and former Heed Fellow, one of us (J.W.H.) can attest that Dr. Bakr would be highly deserving of this honor and would meet or exceed your expectations as the type of future academic leader you endeavor to promote with this program.

Respectfully,



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