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RE: Whitney Stuard Sambhariya for Heed Retreat

To Whom It May Concern:

I'm delighted to recommend Whitney Stuard Sambhariya, MD, PhD for the Heed Retreat. Whitney is currently a resident physician-scientist at Johns Hopkins Hospital Wilmer Eye Institute. She completed her MD, PhD at the University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center in 2023 with a 4.0 grade point average. Upon graduation, Whitney received the Ho Din Award, the most prestigious award given to the top graduating medical student. I have had the opportunity to follow her progress and am continually impressed by her success, which can be seen by even the briefest glance at her Biosketch and publication record.

I have been fortunate to train some incredibly smart and talented residents, Whitney however, is certainly unique and stands out among them. In addition to being an academically gifted student, she has a continual and evident passion for science and discovery. She successfully defended her Ph.D. in Cell and Molecular Biology and upon entering residency she was also accepted into Johns Hopkins prestigious PSTP program. She is eager to learn new knowledge and is an innovative scientist demonstrated by having been the PI on **five grants** during her time thus far including an NIH F30 (awarded on her first attempt), Lions Foundation for Sight, the Eye Banking Association of America, AAO Green grant, and a Johns Hopkins PSTP grant. She has had excellent productivity in the laboratory and has presented at a multitude of conferences. During residency she has been awarded multiple international and national travel grants, presented her research on Capitol Hill for NAEVR's Emerging Scientist Program, was awarded the Mitchell First Place Prize in 2024 for her bench research (an award given annually to a Wilmer resident), and presented this research at the AUPO resident research forum (one of four residents chosen across the nation). She has been successful during her time as evidenced by first-author papers in *FASEB*, *Investigative Ophthalmology & Visual Science*, *Frontiers in Endocrinology*, *JAMA Ophthalmology*, *Eye and Contact Lens*, and others. Whitney is committed to her career as a physician-scientist in anterior segment, now working in Dr. Soiberman's laboratory at the Wilmer Eye Institute on "Identification of predictive biomarkers for keratoconus progression". She is dedicated to becoming a physician-scientist in academia evidenced by her receipt of the national "Tylenol Healthy Futures Scholarship" and being chosen as one of ASCRS's Excellence in Residency recipients for 2026. She was even an invited speaker on the podcast "Eyes on Tomorrow: Innovating Ophthalmology Through Strategic Funding, Research, and Advocacy" featuring the NEI director.

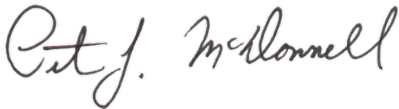
She has continually been involved in the Vision Science Community and has worked on policy changes for Ophthalmology through the American Medical Association (AMA), AAO, Association for Research in Vision and Ophthalmology (ARVO), ACGME, and our state medical societies. Her most recent policy was adopted at the AMA annual meeting to encourage baseline and periodic eye examinations for adults and was supported by the AAO. This May, she will be the first recipient of the Maryland Society of Eye Physicians and Surgeons Residency Advocate Award at our annual state society meeting to recognize her significant contributions. She is continually working to create avenues for others to get involved in advocacy in vision science and ophthalmology and mentors them through the process. She served as the chair of the ARVO Advocacy and Outreach Committee, on the AAO delegation to the AMA, and on an AAO medical education committee. Her ARVO Advocacy and Outreach Committee this year also started the "50 States 50 Stories" initiative highlighting why vision research and NEI/NIH funding is imperative. Her impressive leadership demonstrates her ability to collaborate with stakeholders to reduce health inequities through advocacy and raising awareness of critical issues. For her commitment to other trainees, she has been awarded the AMA Foundation Leadership Development Institute and the AMA's Excellence in Promoting Diversity and Inclusion Award American Medical Association. These awards highlight both her tenacity and commitment to ophthalmology.



Whitney is really a tour de force. She recently finished a two-year appointment with the AMA Foundation Board of Directors and has since this been appointed to the ACGME Ophthalmology Review Committee, as the single resident representative nationwide. She has extensive experience serving BOTs, having served on the Baltimore City Medical Society BOD, Maryland State Medical Society BOT, and ISER's BOT. Finally, she was chosen as one of 10 physicians last year to be a part of the Medical Justice in Advocacy Fellowship by the Satcher Health Leadership Institute and AMA and focused on low vision medication accessibility.

In summary, Whitney is highly engaged and compassionate in every aspect of her work. She truly embodies the idea of commitment to our patients inside and outside of the clinic. She is driven, capable, and committed to reaching her goal of becoming a physician-scientist and a leader in the field. She is a rising star in Ophthalmology and a future leader in medicine. I recommend Whitney with the highest level of enthusiasm. Thank you for your consideration of this promising young candidate.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Peter J. McDonnell". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Peter J. McDonnell, M.D.