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I am writing this letter of recommendation on behalf of Shakira Abney-Wisdom as she applies for the Dr. Charles Mitchell, Jr. Leadership Scholarship from the National Alliance of Black School Educators. As a faculty member with the Ritchie Program for School Leaders at the University of Denver, I met Shakira when she entered the program to complete her Principal licensure in 2017. She immediately struck me as a remarkably intelligent student who held herself to rigorously high standards while continually acting on her outstanding values and beliefs. As an astute learner and listener, she took command of content and was able to apply her new knowledge immediately in a variety of settings. Shakira was always prepared for class, shared her experiences freely and asked probing, challenging questions. The Dr. Charles Mitchell, Jr. Leadership Scholarship seems to be perfectly aligned with the skills, aptitude, capacity and goals that I have seen in Shakira and that she has shared with me.

As the principal of Denver School of the Arts Middle School and Robert F. Smith STEAM Academy, Shakira's commitment to education is truly exemplary. She brings integrity, honesty and dignity to each encounter regardless of audience or circumstance. She can identify the existing culture of an organization or situation and then create a collaborative vision to advance that culture while fostering more opportunities for students, staff and colleagues. Her decision making is based on thoroughly understanding the history of an issue, collecting and reflecting on all current practices, nuances and impact, while keeping fully in mind the impression and power her decision will have on future behavior.

Thank you for considering Shakira Abney-Wisdom as a candidate for the Dr. Charles Mitchell, Jr. Leadership Scholarship. She has a unique combination of powerful leadership, extraordinary prescience and positive energy. The NABSE goals of academic success for African American students, promoting equity, developing leadership among educators and advocating for high-quality education come alive and are realized because of leaders like Shakira.

Thank you,

Patricia Kipp

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