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To whom it may concern:

It is my pleasure to write this letter of recommendation for Jeff Almonaitis. I have had the opportunity to work with Jeff on several occasions over the past 5 years, as a consultant working in his school district and as a Student Teaching Supervisor at Long Island University's Riverhead Campus. Based on my experiences with him during our work with mutual students and teacher candidates, I hold Jeff in the highest esteem and am happy to share some of my insights from our time working together.

In my opinion, Jeff's compassion for students with disabilities is one of the most important aspects of his character. In my observations while working in both roles, Jeff's support for students with disabilities in particular was evident in his focus on providing individual supports while embracing the unique individuals that he was guiding. He cares for each of his students as individuals and embraces them as they are, as was evident in his interactions with both his students and his student teachers.

As a Board Certified Behavior Analyst (BCBA) working as a district consultant, I provided support to teachers of students in need of intensive behavioral support. My graduate education, certifications, and experience in teaching (both general and special education at the K-12 level and at the university level) allowed me to provide support to teachers and students that extended beyond guidance related to the application of behavior analytic principles to a focus on integration of less-restrictive Tier 1 and 2 strategies as a foundation for individual student success.

When I first began working with Jeff, he was the teacher of a first-grade general education classroom. From the beginning of my time in his room, I was consistently impressed by Jeff's implementation of proactive management strategies that allowed his class of young students to take ownership in the classroom and begin to be self-directed learners. Jeff used strategies established in education research that I do not often see in practice outside of our pedagogical coursework. Jeff's classroom is a testament to the ways implementation of evidence-based practices can support individual student agency, even for very young learners.

In terms of behavior supports for the individual students we worked with, Jeff reliably implemented individualized (evidence-based) strategies prior to the start of my interventions. When a student needed support beyond Tier 1 and 2 strategies, we worked collaboratively to adjust established systems to increase students' access to education in their least restrictive environment. Collaboration is a key element in effective and successful programming for

students with disabilities due to the continuous need for programmatic and behavioral analysis across disciplines, and I was always happy to work with Jeff to support individual elementary students in his classroom. Jeff and I shared a mutual respect for one another's contributions to his students' success, and I was always welcomed into his classroom.

As the Student Teaching Supervisor at Long Island University's Riverhead Campus, I work with many educators in districts across Long Island. At my request, Jeff hosted LIU Riverhead student teachers in his 5th grade classroom in Spring 2024 and Spring 2025. Jeff welcomed my student teachers into his classroom and maintained frequent communication with them and with me to support their individual development as teacher candidates. Over the past few years at the University, we have seen an increase in the number of students with disabilities who are pursuing a career in education. As he does with his elementary students, Jeff welcomed and embraced our student teachers with disabilities and supported them in developing individualized strategies to help them to experience success as future teachers.

One of those student teachers required a high level of support from both of their cooperating teachers, and an intensive support plan was needed to address areas of weakness across multiple areas of teacher competency. When the teacher candidate failed to make progress following initial efforts to support their development through targeted proactive guidance, Jeff worked with us to develop a written plan for more intensive supports related to planning, differentiation, management and professional teaching responsibilities. Jeff spent a considerable amount of time working closely with our team to support the student teacher during their time in his classroom and provided much more support than is typically required of cooperating teachers working with our student teachers, including hosting the student teacher for a longer period than initially requested. Throughout the student teacher's time in his classroom, Jeff provided frequent feedback related to the targets for improvement, which allowed me to offer focused, timely guidance to the student teacher. With his continuous and intensive support, the student teacher was able to make progress and meet the benchmarks that were required to obtain a second student teaching placement.

In all my work with him across classrooms and roles, Jeff has maintained a focus on creating a classroom environment that supports each member of his classroom and I am happy to provide this recommendation. Please don't hesitate to contact me if I can be of further assistance.

Sincerely,

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