Dear Professor Siegel,

Following your request for material to help you prepare a letter of recommendation for me, attached please find a description of our work together. I hope you find it helpful. I’m also attaching the following:

* Resume
* Transcripts
* A personal statement I wrote two years ago as part of my LL.M application that might provide some background and context.

Thank you so much for your support and for agreeing to be a member of my JSD committee. Most importantly, I deeply appreciate your willingness to write a letter of recommendation for me.

You may be interested to hear that I will be meeting with Professor Post later this week – of course, I’m looking forward to this.

Best regards, and thanking you again,

Alaa Hajyahia

Professor Reva Siegel was my “welcome committee” to Yale University.

Even prior to starting my LL.M studies at Yale Law School in the spring term of 2021 as a Yale Fox Fellow, I reached out to Professor Siegel to consult with her about whether to pursue my LL.M. at Yale or Harvard Law School. She helped clarify the different factors I should consider in my choice, including future academic plans, areas of academic interests, courses, and available law professors with whom I could work. I later reached out Professor Siegel again for advice on formulating a reading list relevant to my academic interests for study during my Fox Fellowship. This led to participation in Professor Siegel’s “Democratic Constitutionalism” and “Law and Inequality” courses, and further exploration of scholarship related to law and inequality in general, and gender inequality, in particular.

In the summer 2021, while studying for my LL.M., I again sought Professor Siegel’s guidance in choosing courses for my fall schedule. Based on her advice to consider the most potentially beneficial courses, I designed a schedule that I can already recognize has been enriching academically and intellectually, enabling me to deepen my knowledge on subjects and issues of importance to me, and to explore issues involved in the central topic of my JSD proposal.

In addition, during the fall term, using the opportunity LL.M. students are offered to complete three units of credits for a supervised research project, I worked under Professor Siegel’s close supervision on my research. This work resulted in an article that I recently submitted for publication as a student note for the *Yale Journal of Law and Feminism*. My paper “Gender Equality and The Muslim Woman Subject” critically analyzes the European Court of Human Rights’ judgments in cases ruling on a series of state laws prohibiting the wearing of religious symbols, such as Christian crosses, Jewish skullcaps, and Muslim hijabs in public venues. By focusing on one such representative case, this paper aims to challenge the European Court of Human Rights’ view of the Muslim woman as victimized, lacking agency, and perhaps religiously-obsessed. For this paper, I applied an interdisciplinary approach that, borrowing principles from the disciplines of anthropology and recent cultural sociology, contributed new perspectives and insights to the legal discourse. In addition, drawing on the work of Professors Nejaime and Siegel on religious freedom, reproductive rights, and LGBT equality in the American context, my paper suggests alternatives that the European Court of Human Rights can apply to reconcile religious accommodation and other rights.

This research represents a year-long thorough and developmental process, beginning in the spring of 2021, even before starting my LL.M studies. Professor Siegel recommended texts to read, from which I was able to map relevant topics. She subsequently suggested possible directions for the paper, and advised me during the course of its writing. She first gave advice about the abstract, meeting with me twice to discuss it. During the writing process, Professor Siegal sent a number of relevant articles and helped me better articulate my research question.

This process resulted not only in a the paper mentioned above, but in an invitation to present the abstract at the Law and Society Association annual meeting to be held in Lisbon, Portugal from July 13–16, 2022 at the Iscte University Institute. In addition, working on this paper exposed me to many bodies of literature that are serving as the basis for another paper I am now writing scheduled to be published in 2022 as a chapter in the Rutledge *Gender Companion to Gender and Covid-19’s Handbook*.

Professor Siegel agreed to serve as a reader on my JSD committee, and she has discussed how I can develop this latest paper into a JSD proposal, also providing me with pioneering articles relevant to the topic. In essence, this paper that I wrote following my research with Professor Siegel is a first step in writing about a topic about which I’m passionate and plan to explore in depth during the coming three years as a JSD student at Yale Law School. My hope is that Professor Siegel will continue to accompany me on my intellectual journey, and that, ultimately, learning from her will enable me to become a legal scholar in Israel.