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To Whom It May Concern:

I am writing to offer my praise for the proposed project *Visual Narratives to Facilitate Immigrant/Refugee Family Mental Health Literacy, Support, and Resilience*. The co-directors of the project, Brian Goldfarb, Sahra Abdi, and Amina Sheik Mohamed are pursuing the very important work of focusing on the cultural connections that underpin health and well-being. As an author and illustrator who has dedicated my career to writing and illustrating children's literature, generating awareness of diversity has always been important to me. I am inspired by this project's application of visual storytelling to addressing the pressing concerns of refugee and immigrant populations. This was an important aim of the *New York Times* best-selling children's book that I illustrated, *Walt Whitman: Words for America* (2004). The book, which follows Whitman's life through his experiences during the Civil War, also served as a response to tensions in the US in the period following the 9-11 tragedy.

Over the last two decades, graphic narratives have gained increasing popularity, and there is a growing number of examples of their successful applications in a variety of educational and outreach contexts. I believe that there is great promise in their expanded use as a tool for community dialogue and support.

Dr. Brian Goldfarb's work in education and health communication is well respected. His influential book, *Visual Pedagogy: Media Cultures in and Beyond the Classroom*, chronicles developments in the field within the US and internationally. I became acquainted with Dr. Goldfarb about 15 years ago, and have been impressed with his creative and passionate educational work in a variety of community settings. Having had the opportunity to view some of the early illustrations and narrative segments that he and his collaborators are developing, I am confident that their project represents a potent approach for addressing the acculturation challenges of refugee communities. I also imagine that it will be useful as a resource for the training of clinical professionals and contributing to the development of their cultural competence and cross-cultural communication abilities.

The power of the arts and culture to contribute to our well-being is often underappreciated. Story telling has a long history as a medium for both transmitting information about health and reinforcing behaviors that support it. Goldfarb and his collaborators' vision for using graphic narratives to support refugee mental health draws on this tradition and supports it with the experience and expertise of those working in public health and family mental health and

psychology. Importantly, their methodology involves community members in contributing to the visual and oral building blocks of the narratives. I urge your organization to aid them in producing and piloting *Visual Narratives to Facilitate Immigrant/Refugee Family Mental Health Literacy, Support, and Resilience*. I am confident that their work will have positive impacts as our country searches for effective modes of addressing the evolving challenges of promoting an inclusive and pluralistic society.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Brian Selznick". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Brian Selznick

Selznick is Illustrator and Author of Award winning books including #1 New York Times Bestseller, *Wonderstruck*; California Young Readers Medal (2000) winner, *Riding Freedom*; and Caldecott Medal winner, *The Invention of Hugo Cabret*, which was adapted for the film *Hugo* (2011) directed by Martin Scorsese.

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