Complainant,

v.

TARIK YAHIA FARRAG, M.D.,

Respondent.

BEFORE THE MEDICAL LICENSURE COMMISSION OF ALABAMA

CASE NO. 2023-023

FINDINGS OF FACT AND CONCLUSIONS OF LAW

This matter came before the Medical Licensure Commission of Alabama for a contested case hearing on August 23, 2023. After receiving and considering all of the relevant evidence and argument, we find the Respondent, Tarik Yahia Farrag, M.D., guilty of the disciplinary charges and impose professional discipline as set forth below.

I. Introduction and Statement of the Case

The respondent in this case is Tarik Yahia Farrag, M.D. (hereinafter "Respondent"). Respondent was first licensed by the Commission on January 23, 2013, having been issued license no. MD.32237. The disciplinary charges in this case arise out of Respondent's alleged presentation of forged documents and false

statements in connection with his application for licensure in Alabama, and in connection with his application for hospital privileges in Florida.

II. Procedural History

On February 21, 2023, the Alabama Board of Medical Examiners filed an Administrative Complaint and Petition for Summary Suspension of License (the "Administrative Complaint"). The Administrative Complaint, as amended on April 7, 2023, contains six counts.

Count One alleges that Respondent committed fraud in applying for a license to practice medicine in Alabama in violation of Ala. Code § 34-24-360(1), in that, on or about January 14, 2013, he submitted one or more fraudulent documents to the Alabama Board of Medical Examiners in connection with his application for a certificate of qualification. Count Two likewise alleges that Respondent is guilty of fraud in violation of Ala. Code § 34-24-360(1), in that he falsely represented to the Board in his application that he had completed three years of postgraduate training. Count Three alleges that Respondent falsely impersonated J. Drew Prosser, M.D., Residency Program Director at the Medical College of Georgia, in connection with his application for hospital privileges at the Sarasota Memorial Healthcare System, which would constitute unprofessional conduct in violation of Ala. Code § 34-24-360(2) and Ala. Admin. Code r. 545-

X-4-.06(16). In Count Four, the Board alleges that Respondent committed unprofessional conduct by making one or more false and fraudulent statements in the same application for hospital privileges, again in violation of Ala. Code § 34-24-360(2) and Ala. Admin. Code r. 545-X-4-.06(16). Counts Five and Six¹ allege additional instances of fraudulent conduct in connection with Respondent's application for a certificate of qualification and license to practice medicine in Alabama. In Count Five, the Board alleges that Respondent answered Question 22 on the application falsely, and in Count Six, the Board alleges that Respondent answered Question 23 falsely. These false answers are alleged to violate Ala. Code § 34-24-360(1).

In accordance with Ala. Code § 34-24-361(f) and Ala. Admin. Code r. 545-X-3-.13, on February 22, 2023, we entered an order summarily suspending Respondent's license to practice medicine and set this matter for a full evidentiary hearing. Respondent has executed a valid waiver of the 120-day limit on summary suspension found in Ala. Code § 41-22-19(d).

On August 23, 2023, we conducted a full evidentiary hearing on these charges as prescribed in Ala. Admin. Code r. 545-X-3. The case supporting the

¹ Counts Five and Six were added in the Board's Amended Administrative Complaint, filed on April 7, 2023.

disciplinary charges was presented by the Alabama Board of Medical Examiners through its attorneys E. Wilson Hunter and Alicia Harrison. Respondent was represented by attorneys T. Kent Garrett and William Rayborn. Pursuant to Ala. Admin. Code r. 545-X-3-.08(1), the Honorable William R. Gordon presided as Hearing Officer. Each side was offered the opportunity to present evidence and argument in support of its respective contentions, and to cross-examine the witnesses presented by the other side. After careful review, we have made our own independent judgments regarding the weight and credibility to be afforded to the evidence, and the fair and reasonable inferences to be drawn from it. Having done so, and as prescribed in Ala. Code § 41-22-16, we enter the following Findings of Fact and Conclusions of Law.

III. Findings of Fact

We find the following facts to be established by the preponderance of the evidence presented at the hearing:

1. In September 1998, Respondent graduated from the medical school of Assiut University in Egypt. (ABME Ex. 2, ABME000048.)

2. On July 1, 2009, Respondent entered into the otolaryngology residency training program at the Medical College of Georgia² as a PGY-1.

² The Medical College of Georgia changed its name to "Georgia Health Sciences University" in February 2011. In 2013, the Georgia Health Sciences University merged with

(ABME Ex. 9, ABME001467.) Respondent was renewed as a PGY-2 on July 1, 2010.

3. On August 2, 2010, Respondent was placed on a four-month Academic Remediation Plan "due to performance issues related primarily to professionalism and communication problems." (ABME Ex. 16, 0717.) Respondent was warned that "any further infractions would result in immediate termination from the program," and that he would be required "to demonstrate to the faculty . . . that [he] ha[d] insight into [his] current situation and [his] lack of professionalism and communication issues." (*Id*.)

4. Respondent failed to complete his first Academic Remediation Plan. On November 23, 2010, the faculty of the otolaryngology residency program met and unanimously voted to suspend Respondent's clinical privileges, while allowing him to remain employed in a non-clinical research capacity. (ABME Ex. 16, 0725.) The faculty advised Respondent that "[t]here are serious concerns regarding your conduct which is detrimental to the Medical College of Georgia

Augusta State University, creating "Georgia Regents University," although the medical college itself continued to be known as the Medical College of Georgia. In 2015, the name of Georgia Regents University was changed to Augusta University. For simplicity's sake, we will simply refer to the Medical College of Georgia as the Medical College of Georgia, disregarding these consolidations and name changes.

See, *e.g.*, <u>https://www.georgiaencyclopedia.org/articles/education/georgia-health-</u> <u>sciences-university/;</u> <u>https://www.augusta.edu/mcg/documents/mcg-history-brochure-jan-</u> <u>2021.pdf</u>.

Department of Otolaryngology" (*Id.*) The faculty based its decision on Respondent's "persistent unprofessional behavior despite being placed on remediation . . . and receiving professional guidance." (*Id.*)

5. In accordance with a House Officer Evaluation, Grievance, & Due Process Policy, Respondent appealed the decision to Peter F. Buckley, M.D., the Dean of the Medical College of Georgia. After a hearing, Dr. Buckley decided to place Respondent on a "remediation plan in support of Dr. Farrag and one that comprehensively and unequivocally addresses the elements and intent to foster and only accept—complete and sustained professional behavior of Dr. Farrag." (ABME Ex. 16, 0728.)

6. Pursuant to Dr. Buckley's decision, Respondent was reinstated to clinical training duties on April 11, 2011. (ABME Ex. 16, 0733.) The elements of Respondent's second remediation plan included formal mentoring with monthly reporting, professional counseling, monthly reports to the program evaluation committee, and active participation in training in all core competencies defined by the Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education. (*Id.* at 0734.) Respondent was once again warned that "[f]ailure to meet the conditions of this academic remediation will result in your dismissal from the residency training program." (*Id.* at 0734, 0735.)

7. Respondent also failed to complete his second remediation plan. On May 25, 2011—just 45 days after being reinstated to clinical duties pursuant to the second remediation plan—Respondent was stopped by a police officer for running a red light on the way to the hospital. After investigation, the Residency Program Evaluation Committee determined that Respondent lied to the police officer about a medical emergency that was allegedly occurring at the hospital, and that Respondent also tried to enlist his colleagues to lie to support his story. As a result, the Committee determined that Respondent had violated the terms of his second remediation plan, and that Respondent should be terminated from the program. (ABME Ex. 16, 0748-0751.)

8. Dr. David Terris, Chair of the Otolaryngology-Head and Neck Surgery department, communicated this decision to Respondent in a memorandum dated June 10, 2011. (ALBME Ex. 16, 1000.) After outlining the findings about Respondent's attempted fabrications in connection with running the red light, Dr. Terris informed Respondent that his "actions represented a major violation of professionalism and patient care" and a "major violation of your remediation plan." (*Id.*) 9. Respondent again appealed the decision to Dr. Buckley, Dean of the Medical College.³ Dr. Buckley asked the Office of Internal Audit to conduct an independent review of the events of May 25, 2011, including the allegations about Respondent lying to the police officer. Based on that review, the Office of Internal Audit determined that "the information that was considered by the Residency Program Evaluation Committee (RPEC) appears to be accurate and fairly presented." (ALBME Ex. 16, 0762.) On June 7, 2012, Dr. Buckley formally upheld the decision to terminate Respondent from the residency program.

10. Taking into account the periods of time in which Respondent's clinical privileges were suspended and the period during which his final termination was on appeal to the Dean, Respondent received a total of 19 months of postgraduate training credit for his time at the Medical College of Georgia residency program. Respondent was not credited with successful completion of the PGY-2 year.

11. In mid-January 2013, Respondent submitted an application to the Alabama Board of Medical Examiners for a certificate of qualification to practice

³ While the appeal was pending, Respondent technically remained employed by the Medical College of Georgia, but was "instructed to pursue independent home study with no patient interaction." (ALBME Ex. 16, 1000.)

medicine in Alabama. (ABME Ex. 2, ABME000058.) In his application, Respondent answered the following questions negatively:

22. Have you ever been placed on academic or disciplinary probation by a medical school or postgraduate program?

23. Have you ever been disciplined for unprofessional conduct/behavior reasons by a medical school or postgraduate program?

 $(Id.)^4$

12. Respondent also represented to the Board that he had engaged in post-graduate medical education training at the Medical College of Georgia from July 1, 2009 through "present," or about 3½ years. (ALBME Ex. 2, ABME000059.) Respondent similarly represented that he held hospital privileges at Medical College of Georgia from July 1, 2009 through "present." (ALBME Ex. 2, ABME000060.)

13. With his application, Respondent submitted a curriculum vitae, which represented that Respondent's "Current Appointment"—as of January 14, 2013—was as a resident at the Department of Otolaryngology at the Georgia Health Sciences University. (ABME Ex. 2, ABME000030.)

⁴ In his sworn testimony at the evidentiary hearing in this matter, Respondent admitted that he responded negatively to Questions 22 and 23, and he maintained that those answers were true.

14. Respondent verified the accuracy of his answers under oath by subscribing the following statement: "I, Tarik Y. Farrag, certify after being duly sworn, that all of the information supplied in the foregoing application is true and correct to the best of my knowledge.... I acknowledge that any false or untrue statement or representation made in this application may result in the revocation of my license to practice medicine granted to me and criminal prosecution to the fullest extent of the law." (ABME Ex. 2, ABME000061.)

15. Respondent's negative answers to Questions 22 and 23, and his multiple representations that he had engaged in post-graduate training and held hospital privileges at the Medical College of Georgia from July 1, 2009 through "present" (*i.e.*, January 14, 2013) were knowingly false.

16. Further as part of Respondent's application for a certificate of qualification, there was submitted an "Appendix B—Post Graduate Education Certificate." (ABME Ex. 2, ABME000052.) "Appendix B" is a pre-printed form that is supposed to be completed and submitted to the Board by a responsible individual representing the applicant's post-graduate residency training program. The "Appendix B" submitted in support of Respondent's application was purportedly completed and signed by Stil Kountakis, M.D. Appendix B purportedly verifies that Respondent "successfully completed 3+ years of post

graduate training" at the Medical College Georgia during the dates July 2009 through June 6, 2012.⁵

17. The "Appendix B" submitted in support of Respondent's application

to practice medicine in Alabama also contains negative responses to the following

three questions:

Does this individual's official record reflect that he/she was ever placed on academic or disciplinary probation? <u>If yes, please attach a</u> <u>copy of the written notification to the individual</u>.

Does this individual's official record reflect that he/she was ever disciplined for unprofessional conduct/behavioral reasons? If yes, please attach a copy of the written notification to the individual of the disciplinary action.

Does this individual's official record reflect that he/she was ever notified in writing that there were any limitations or special requirements imposed on him/her because of questions of academic or clinical competence, disciplinary problems, or any other reason? If yes, please attach a copy of the written notification to the individual.

(*Id*.)

⁵ "Appendix B" explicitly defines "successfully completed." The form says: "has completed ____years of post graduate training' means the applicant has successfully completed or met the program's established criteria, standards or requirements which are necessary for promotion to the next level of post graduate training or the applicant has successfully completed or met the program's established criteria, standards or requirements which are necessary for completion of this program. Note to applicant: Merely accumulating 12 months or 36 months of post graduate or residency training shall not be evidence satisfactory to the Board that the applicant has fulfilled the post graduate requirement necessary for qualifying for the issuance of a certificate of qualification for a license to practice medicine in Alabama." (ALBME Ex. 2, ALBME000052.)

18. In his testimony at the evidentiary hearing in this matter, Respondent testified that he believed that the three negative responses referred to above were, in fact, true—a contention that cannot be reconciled with the overwhelming evidence before the Commission. Moreover, both Respondent himself and another witness presented by Respondent expressed unequivocal views that Dr. Kountakis was "bigoted" toward graduates of medical schools outside the United States, which cannot be reconciled with any claim that Dr. Kountakis would fabricate "Appendix B" himself.

19. Similar documents submitted by the Medical College of Georgia to the Georgia Composite Medical Board, and completed by Dr. Kountakis, do not contain the misrepresentations outlined above. (ABME Ex. 16, 0577, 0583.)

20. Based on the totality of the evidence before the Commission, therefore, it seems evident, and we find, that "Appendix B" is an inauthentic and fraudulent document. We so find, because: (1) the representations made in "Appendix B" are plainly false and irreconcilable with the documentary evidence of Respondent's history at the Medical College of Georgia, as well as the firsthand testimony of Dr. Drew Prosser, discussed below in greater detail, that corroborates that documentary history; (2) the authenticity of "Appendix B" is irreconcilable with Respondent's insistence that Dr. Kountakis is "bigoted" against him; and (3) the voluminous files provided by the Medical College of Georgia pertaining to Respondent do not contain any copy of "Appendix B." Further, we find as a factual matter that Respondent created and submitted "Appendix B" to the Board, or caused it to be created and submitted. We so find because: (1) Respondent is the only person who stood to gain from the false representations made in "Appendix B"; (2) in his testimony in this matter, Respondent expressly adopted as his own the false representations made in "Appendix B"; (3) Respondent had the means to carry out the false representations; and (4) there simply is no other plausible alternative hypothesis.

21. The representation made in "Appendix B" that Respondent "successfully completed 3+ years" of postgraduate training at the Medical College of Georgia, and the three negative responses referred to above, are all factually false, and all of those false representations were made by Respondent with knowledge of their falsity.

22. In late 2022, Respondent applied for hospital privileges at Sarasota Memorial Healthcare System ("SMHS") in Sarasota, Florida. As part of the hospital's credentialing process, the hospital sought verification of Respondent's residency training from Drew Prosser, M.D., Residency Program Director for the Medical College of Georgia Department of Otolaryngology.

23. After receipt of purported verification documents, SMHS credentialing staff independently made contact with Dr. Prosser and asked him to

verify the authenticity of the documents received by SMHS. Dr. Prosser informed SMHS—and he testified under oath before the Commission—that the documents submitted to SMHS in support of Respondent's application for hospital privileges were forgeries, and were neither created, signed, nor submitted by him. Dr. Prosser told SHMS, and he confirmed before the Commission in sworn testimony, that the e-mail address from which the forged documents were sent to SMHS (dprosser1@augustaunivsom.org) was not Dr. Prosser's correct e-mail address, and was not an e-mail address that Dr. Prosser had ever used, had access to, or had control over. (ABME Ex. 4, ABME000065.)

24. One of the documents that SMHS showed to Dr. Prosser was a reference verification form putatively completed and submitted by Dr. Prosser (ABME000066-000068). Dr. Prosser told SMHS, and he confirmed in sworn testimony before the Commission, that he neither completed, signed, nor submitted the reference verification form.

25. The reference verification form submitted to SMHS (ABME000066-000068) contains multiple false statements. Specifically, the reference verification form includes negative responses to the following questions:

To the best of your knowledge, has the applicant ever been subject to any disciplinary action?

To the best of your knowledge, has the applicant ever exhibited disruptive behavior?

To the best of your knowledge, has the applicant ever been under investigation?

To the best of your knowledge, has the applicant ever had their clinical privileges limited, suspended, revoked, or not renewed?

To the best of your knowledge, has the applicant ever displayed problems that may affect the applicant's ability to perform the privileges requested?

(*Id*.)

26. We find the negative responses to the foregoing questions to be

factually false and plainly contradicted by Respondent's residency record at the

Medical College of Georgia.

27. The same reference verification form (ABME000066-000068) is

laden with exceedingly implausible narrative comments. As examples:

Question: How long have you known the applicant? During what time period did you have the opportunity to observe (MM/YYYY) the applicant's practice of medicine?	Comments: Dr. Tarik Y. Farrag is extremely physician, surgeon, and person. He is on the top 1% in all above respects for all providers I have ever known.
Question: Based on your knowledge of the practitioner, does he/she have the training, experience and competence to be recommended for membership and if applicable to perform all the privileges currently being requested? (Please refer to the privileges request that was attached to your email)	Comments: Actually he actually had huge knowledge as well as clinical and surgical background prior to joining that allow several fields beyond many basic and advanced Otolaryngology-Head & Neck privileges, including Critical Care Medicine (ICU), as well as Emergency Medicine. His skills were truly above and beyond. He was called the "Anatomy Guy" due to in-depth knowledge of every inch in the head and neck. He was approached frequently by more senior trainees asking him Q's. I believe the above was based on the fact that he joined out [<i>sic</i>] program after already completing 5 years of complete Otolaryngology-Head & Neck Surgery, ICU

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	training, Laser Courses, Emergency Medicine, Fellowship at the prestigious The Johns Hopkins School of Medicine Department of Otolaryngology-Head & Neck Surgery. His skills already equaled or even exceeded specialists of ICU and ER. He obtained (above average) and (exceeding expectations) in all of his evaluation in or outside our department. He has rare quiet nature & appropriate prioritization while multi- tasking as well as managing serious emergencies and highly critical cases. I also believe his academic (research) mentality has a lot to do with that.
Question: Do you have any additional information/concerns you would like to discuss with the Chair of the Credentials Committee in a confidential manner?	Comments: Talking about the unforgettable Dr. Tarik Y. Farrag needs long time as well as pages. I hope my comments above were capable to cover some of his innate merits. His educational and supervisory skills and ideas to younger trainees and medical students were amazing. His thought process in the business, humanitarian, disaster management aspects, etc. are all beyond all. Just rare combinations.
Question: Do you recommend the applicant without reservation?	Comments: VERY MUCH SO.

(ABME Ex. 4, ABME000066-000068)

28. The members of the Commission have reviewed thousands of residency verification forms throughout our careers. We find the statements outlined above to be markedly uncharacteristic of the types of statements generally made in authentic forms of this nature.

29. Also submitted to the SMHS credentialing office was a one-page residency verification form. (ABME Ex. 4, ABME000070). It, too, contains false statements and the forged signature of Dr. Prosser. Dr. Prosser told SMHS, and

he directly confirmed in his sworn testimony before the Commission, that he neither completed, signed, nor submitted the residency verification form.

30. Specifically, the one-page residency verification form represents that Respondent was a resident at the Medical College of Georgia from July 1, 2009 through June 30, 2012. It further claims that Respondent's residency was terminated "due to voluntary nonrenewal of contract due to family health." In response to the question, "During the time noted was this practitioner ever subject to any disciplinary action?" Response was "None." All of these statements are false, and none of them were actually communicated by Dr. Prosser.

31. Finally, a three-page document entitled "ACGME Summative Evaluation – Verification of Graduate Medical Education & Training" was submitted to SMHS. (ABME Ex. 4, ABME000072-ABME000074.) The ACGME Summative Evaluation document also contains multiple false statements, as well as the forged signature of Dr. Prosser. Dr. Prosser told SMHS, and he directly confirmed in his sworn testimony before the Commission, that he neither completed, signed, nor submitted the ACGME Summative Evaluation form.

32. The ACGME Summative Evaluation document includes a representation that Respondent did not complete his residency training program "due to VOLUNTARY [*sic*] nonrenewal of contact [*sic*] because of family severe

health conditions." It also contains negative responses to the following series of questions:

Was the trainee subject to any of the following during training?

(i) Conditions or restrictions beyond those generally associated with the training regimen at your facility;

- (ii) Involuntary leave of absence;
- (iii) Suspension;
- (iv) Non-promotion/non-renewal; or
- (v) Dismissal.

(ABME Ex. 4, ABME000072-ABME000073.)

33. We find the representations about the reasons for Respondent's discontinuation of the residency program at the Medical College of Georgia, and the negative responses to the foregoing questions, to be factually false and plainly contradicted by Respondent's residency record at the Medical College of Georgia.

34. Respondent denies creating any of the forged documents submitted to SMHS. Based on our direct observations of Respondent's oral testimony, our observations of Respondent's demeanor and credibility, as well as the first-hand testimony of Dr. Prosser that he did not complete, sign, or submit any of the documents referred to above, and based on the totality of the evidence presented, both direct and circumstantial, we choose to discredit Respondent's denial and find instead that the false and forged documents submitted to SMHS were created by, or at the direction of, Respondent. Respondent is the only person who stood to gain from the false representations, he had the means to carry out the false representations, and there simply is no other plausible alternative hypothesis. We find as a matter of fact, therefore, that all of the false statements referred to in Findings of Fact Nos. 25, 26, 30, 32, and 33 were in fact made by Respondent, and that they were knowingly false when made.

IV. Conclusions of Law

1. The Medical Licensure Commission of Alabama has jurisdiction over the subject matter of this contested case proceeding pursuant to Act No. 1981-218, Ala. Code §§ 34-24-310, *et seq*. Under certain conditions, the Commission "shall have the power and duty to suspend, revoke, or restrict any license to practice medicine or osteopathy in the State of Alabama or place on probation or fine any licensee." Ala. Code § 34-24-360. In addition to all other authorized penalties and remedies, the Commission may impose a fine of up to \$10,000 per violation, and may require the payment of administrative expenses incurred in connection with the disciplinary proceeding. Ala. Code § 34-24-381(a), (b).

2. Respondent was properly notified of the time, date, and place of the administrative hearing and of the charges against him in compliance with Ala.

Code §§ 34-24-361(e) and 41-22-12, and Ala. Admin. Code r. 545-X-3-.03(3), (4). At all relevant times, Respondent was a licensee of this Commission and was and is subject to the Commission's jurisdiction.

3. Respondent graduated from a medical school outside the United States. As a prerequisite to becoming legally qualified to obtain a certificate of qualification and license to practice medicine in Alabama, therefore, Respondent was required to complete three years of accredited postgraduate training. At the time of Respondent's application for a certificate of qualification, Ala. Code § 34-24-70(a)(2) provided:

(a) The following constitute the requirements for the issuance of a certificate of qualification for a license to practice medicine in this state:

* * *

(2) POSTGRADUATE EDUCATION REQUIREMENT.

* * *

2. All other applicants for a certificate of qualification who graduated from a college of medicine not accredited by the Liaison Committee on Medical Education of the American Medical Association or a college of osteopathy not accredited by the American Osteopathic Association <u>shall</u> present evidence satisfactory to the board that the applicant has completed three years of postgraduate or residency training in any of the following programs:

a. A program listed in the directory of approved residency training programs published by the American Medical Association.

b. A program accredited by the American Osteopathic Association.

c. A program accredited by the Accreditation Committee of Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada.

d. A program accredited by the College of Family Physicians of Canada.

Ala. Code 34-24-70(a), as amended by Act No. 2009-34 (emphasis added).⁶

4. As a matter of law, Respondent was not legally qualified for a certificate of qualification when he submitted his application to the Board. Respondent would not have been issued a certificate of qualification, nor a license to practice medicine in the State of Alabama, but for the false statements and fraudulent documents submitted by him to the Board of Medical Examiners.

5. An Alabama physician may be disciplined if, after notice and hearing, he or she is found to have committed "[f]raud in applying for or procuring a certificate of qualification to practice medicine or osteopathy or a license to practice medicine or osteopathy in the State of Alabama." Ala. Code § 34-24-360(1).

6. The facts as found above—particularly, Findings of Fact Nos. 15, 20, and 21—lead us to conclude that Respondent is guilty of "[f]raud in applying for

⁶ As it stands today, Section 34-24-70(a)(2) requires graduates of foreign medical schools to obtain only two years of post-graduate residency training. Act No. 2023-233 reduced the post-graduate residency training requirement from three years to two.

or procuring a certificate of qualification to practice medicine or osteopathy or a license to practice medicine or osteopathy in the State of Alabama" as charged in Counts One, Two, Five, and Six of the Amended Administrative Complaint.

7. A physician may also be disciplined for "[u]nprofessional conduct as defined herein or in the rules and regulations promulgated by the commission." Ala. Code § 34-24-360(2). Under our rules, it is "unprofessional conduct" for a physician to "[k]nowingly mak[e] any false or fraudulent statement, written or oral, in connection with . . . applying for privileges or renewing an application for privileges at a health care institution." Ala. Admin. Code r. 545-X-4-.06(16).

8. The facts as found above—particularly, Findings of Fact Nos. 25, 26, and 30-34—lead us to conclude that Respondent is guilty of "unprofessional conduct" as charged in Counts Three and Four of the Amended Administrative Complaint.

9. We reach these conclusions based all of the evidence presented, viewed through the lens of our professional experience and specialized knowledge of the practice of medicine. *See* Ala. Code § 41-22-13(5) ("The experience, technical competence, and specialized knowledge of the agency may be utilized in the evaluation of the evidence.").

V. Decision

Based on all of the foregoing, it is ORDERED, ADJUDGED, AND DECREED:

1. That the Respondent, Tarik Yahia Farrag, M.D., is adjudged **GUILTY** of fraud in applying for and procuring a certificate of qualification and license to practice medicine in violation of Ala. Code § 34-24-360(1), as charged in Count One of the Administrative Complaint.

2. That the Respondent, Tarik Yahia Farrag, M.D., is adjudged **GUILTY** of fraud in applying for and procuring a certificate of qualification and license to practice medicine in violation of Ala. Code § 34-24-360(1), as charged in Count Two of the Administrative Complaint.

3. That the Respondent, Tarik Yahia Farrag, M.D., is adjudged GUILTY of unprofessional conduct in violation of Ala. Code § 34-24-360(2) and Ala. Admin. Code r. 545-X-4-.06(16), as charged in Count Three of the Administrative Complaint.

4. That the Respondent, Tarik Yahia Farrag, M.D., is adjudged **GUILTY** of unprofessional conduct in violation of Ala. Code § 34-24-360(2) and Ala. Admin. Code r. 545-X-4-.06(16), as charged in Count Four of the Administrative Complaint.

5. That the Respondent, Tarik Yahia Farrag, M.D., is adjudged **GUILTY** of fraud in applying for and procuring a certificate of qualification and license to practice medicine in violation of Ala. Code § 34-24-360(1), as charged in Count Five of the Administrative Complaint.

6. That the Respondent, Tarik Yahia Farrag, M.D., is adjudged **GUILTY** of fraud in applying for and procuring a certificate of qualification and license to practice medicine in violation of Ala. Code § 34-24-360(1), as charged in Count Six of the Administrative Complaint.

7. That, separately and severally for each of Counts One, Two, Three, Four, Five, and Six, Respondent's license to practice medicine in the State of Alabama is **REVOKED**.⁷

8. That Respondent shall, within 30 days of this Order,⁸ pay an administrative fine in the amount of \$10,000.00 as to Count One, \$10,000.00 as to Count Two, \$10,000.00 as to Count Three, \$10,000.00 as to Count Four,

⁷ The revocation of a license to practice medicine in Alabama triggers certain legal obligations with regard to patient notification and patient records. See Ala. Admin. Code r. 540-X-9-.10(3), (4)(c); 545-X-4-.08(3), (4)(c). Respondent shall review and comply with these requirements.

⁸ See Ala. Admin. Code r. 545-X-3-.08(8)(d)(i). Respondent is further advised that "[t]he refusal or failure by a physician to comply with an order entered by the Medical Licensure Commission" may be a separate instance of "unprofessional conduct." See Ala. Admin. Code r. 545-X-4-.06(6).

\$10,000.00 as to Count Five, and \$10,000.00 as to Count Six, for a total administrative fine of \$60,000.00.

9. That within 30 days of this order, the Board shall file its bill of costs as prescribed in Ala. Admin. Code r. 545-X-3-.08(10)(b), and Respondent shall file any objections to the cost bill within 10 days thereafter, as prescribed in Ala. Admin. Code r. 545-X-3-.08(10)(c). The Commission reserves the issue of imposition of costs until after full consideration of the Board's cost bill and Respondent's objections, and this reservation does not affect the finality of this order. *See* Ala. Admin. Code r. 545-X-3-.08(10)(e).

DONE on this the 14th day of September, 2023.

THE MEDICAL LICENSURE COMMISSION OF ALABAMA

By:

E-SIGNED by Craig Christopher, M.D. on 2023-09-14 11:19:17 CDT

Craig H. Christopher, M.D. its Chairman

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Complainant,

vs.

TARIK YAHIA FARRAG, M.D.,

Respondent.

BEFORE THE MEDICAL LICENSURE COMMISSION OF ALABAMA

CASE NO. 2023-023

ORDER

This matter is before the Commission on the joint request for a continuance of the hearing currently scheduled for May 24, 2023. The Commission notes that Respondent has executed a valid waiver of the 120-day limitation on summary suspension. For good cause shown, the hearing in this matter is continued and re-set for Wednesday, August 23, 2023, at 10:00 a.m.

DONE on this the $\underline{AV}^{\underline{H}}$ day of May, 2023.

THE MEDICAL LICENSURE COMMISSION OF ALABAMA

By:

E-SIGNED by Craig Christopher, M.D. on 2023-05-26 08:50:48 CDT

Craig H. Christopher, M.D. its Chairman

Complainant,

vs.

TARIK YAHIA FARRAG, M.D.,

Respondent.

BEFORE THE MEDICAL LICENSURE COMMISSION OF ALABAMA

CASE NO. 2023-023

<u>ORDER</u>

This matter is before the Commission on the Respondent's "Motion to Stay

Reporting," filed on March 13, 2023. Upon due consideration of the applicable law

and the relevant portions of the file, the motion is denied.

DONE on this the 28^{-4} day of March, 2023.

THE MEDICAL LICENSURE COMMISSION OF ALABAMA

By:

E-SIGNED by Craig Christopher, M.D. on 2023-03-28 08:53:17 CDT

Craig H. Christopher, M.D. its Chairman

Complainant,

vs.

TARIK YAHIA FARRAG, M.D.,

Respondent.

BEFORE THE MEDICAL LICENSURE COMMISSION OF ALABAMA

CASE NO. 2023-023

ORDER TEMPORARILY SUSPENDING LICENSE AND SETTING HEARING

The Medical Licensure Commission has received the verified Administrative Complaint and Petition for Summary Suspension of License ("the Administrative Complaint") filed by the Alabama State Board of Medical Examiners in this matter. The Commission has determined that this matter is due to be set down for hearing under the provisions of Ala. Code § 34-24-361(e). This Order shall serve as the Notice of Hearing prescribed in Ala. Admin. Code r. 545-X-3-.03(3), (4). The Commission's legal authority and jurisdiction to hold the hearing in this matter are granted by Article 8, Chapter 24, Title 34 of the Code of Alabama (1975), and the particular sections of the statutes and rules involved are as set forth in the Administrative Complaint and in this Order.

1. <u>Temporary Suspension of License</u>

Upon the verified Administrative Complaint of the Alabama State Board of Medical Examiners, and pursuant to the legal authority of Ala. Code §§ 34-24-361(f) and 41-22-19(d), it is the ORDER of the Commission that the license to practice medicine or osteopathy, license certificate number MD.32237 of TARIK YAHIA FARRAG, M.D. ("Respondent"), be, and the same is hereby, immediately SUSPENDED. Respondent is hereby ORDERED and DIRECTED to surrender the said license certificate to \underline{FEGEX} , a duly authorized agent of the Medical Licensure Commission. Respondent is further ORDERED immediately to CEASE and DESIST from the practice of medicine in the State of Alabama.

This action is taken consistent with the Rules and Regulations of the Board of Medical Examiners and the Medical Licensure Commission and Ala. Code § 34-24361(f), based upon the request of the Alabama State Board of Medical Examiners upon the Board's finding and certification that the Board presently has in its possession evidence that the continuance in practice of Respondent may constitute an immediate danger to his patients and the public.

2. <u>Service of the Administrative Complaint</u>

A copy of the Administrative Complaint and a copy of this Order shall be served forthwith upon the Respondent, by personally delivering the same to Respondent if he or she can be found within the State of Alabama, or, by overnight courier, signature required, to Respondent's last known address if he or she cannot be found within the State of Alabama. The Commission further directs that personal service of process shall be made by FEGEX, who is designated as the duly authorized agent of the Commission.

3. <u>Initial Hearing Date</u>

This matter is set for a hearing as prescribed in Ala. Code §§ 34-24-360, et seq., and Ala. Admin. Code Chapter 545-X-3, to be held on $\underbrace{Wellesday}_{May}$, \underbrace{May}_{May} , 2023, at 10:00 a.m., at 848 Washington Avenue, Montgomery, Alabama, 36104. Unless otherwise specified by the Commission, the hearing will be held in person. All parties and counsel are expected to appear and to be prepared for the hearing at this date, time, and place.

4. Appointment of Hearing Officer

The Commission appoints the Honorable William R. Gordon, Circuit Judge (Ret.) as the Hearing Officer in this matter, pursuant to Ala. Admin. Code r. 545-X3-.08. The Hearing Officer shall exercise general superintendence over all prehearing proceedings in this matter, and shall serve as the presiding officer at the hearing, having and executing all powers described in Ala. Admin. Code r. 545-X-3-.08(1)(a)-(g).

5. <u>Answer</u>

Respondent shall file an Answer, as prescribed in Ala. Admin. Code r. 545X-3-.03(6), within 20 calendar days of the service of the Administrative Complaint. If Respondent does not file such an Answer, the Hearing Officer shall enter a general denial on Respondent's behalf.

6. <u>Rescheduling/Motions for Continuance</u>

All parties and attorneys are expected to check their schedules immediately for conflicts. Continuances will be granted only upon written motion and only for good cause as determined by the Chairman of the Medical Licensure Commission. Continuances requested on grounds of engagement of legal counsel on the eve of the hearing will not be routinely granted.

7. <u>Case Management Orders</u>

The Hearing Officer is authorized, without further leave of the Commission, to enter such case management orders as he considers appropriate to the particular case. Among any other matters deemed appropriate by the Hearing Officer, the Hearing Officer may enter orders addressing the matters listed in Ala. Admin. Code r. 545-X-3-.03(5)(a)-(f) and/or 545-X-3-.08(1)(a)-(g). All parties will be expected to comply with such orders.

8. <u>Manner of Filing and Serving Pleadings</u>

All pleadings, motions, requests, and other papers in this matter may be filed and served by e-mail. All filings should be e-mailed to:

• The Hearing Officer, William Gordon (wrgordon@charter.net);

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- The Director of Operations of the Medical Licensure Commission, Rebecca Robbins (rrobbins@almlc.gov);
- General Counsel of the Medical Licensure Commission, Aaron Dettling (adettling@almlc.gov);
- General Counsel for the Alabama Board of Medical Examiners, Wilson Hunter (whunter@albme.gov); and
- Respondent/Licensee or his or her counsel, as appropriate.

The Director of Operations of the Medical Licensure Commission shall be the custodian of the official record of the proceedings in this matter.

9. Discovery

Consistent with the administrative quasi-judicial nature of these proceedings, limited discovery is permitted, under the supervision of the Hearing Officer. *See* Ala. Code § 41-22-12(c); Ala. Admin. Code r. 545-X-3-.04. All parties and attorneys shall confer in good faith with one another regarding discovery. If disputes regarding discovery are not resolved informally, a motion may be filed with the Hearing Officer, who is authorized to hold such hearings as appropriate and to to make appropriate rulings regarding such disputes.

10. <u>Publicity and Confidentiality</u>

Under Alabama law, the Administrative Complaint and this Order are public documents. The hearing itself is closed and confidential. The Commission's written

decision, if any, will also be public. *See* Ala. Code § 34-24-361.1; Ala. Admin. Code r. 545-X-3-.03(10)(h), (11).

11. <u>Stipulations</u>

The parties are encouraged to submit written stipulations of matters as to which there is no basis for good-faith dispute. Stipulations can help to simplify and shorten the hearing, facilitate the Commission's decisional process, and reduce the overall costs of these proceedings. Written stipulations will be most useful to the Commission if they are submitted in writing approximately 10 days preceding the hearing. The Hearing Officer is authorized to assist the parties with the development and drafting of written stipulations.

12. Judicial Notice

The parties are advised that the Commission may take judicial notice of its prior proceedings, findings of fact, conclusions of law, decisions, orders, and judgments, if any, relating to the Respondent. *See* Ala. Code § 41-22-13(4); Ala. Admin. Code r. 545-X-3-.09(4).

13. Settlement Discussions

The Commission encourages informal resolution of disputes, where possible and consistent with public interest. If a settlement occurs, the parties should notify the Hearing Officer, the Commission's Director of Operations, and Commission's General Counsel. The terms of settlement are subject to the approval of the Commission. If approved, the Commission will generally incorporate the settlement terms into a Consent Decree.

14. Subpoenas

The Commission has the statutory authority to compel the attendance of witnesses, and the production of books and records, by the issuance of subpoenas. *See* Ala. Code §§ 34-24-363; 41-22-12(c); Ala. Admin. Code r. 545-X-3-.05. The parties may request that the Hearing Officer issue subpoenas for witnesses and/or documents, and the Hearing Officer is authorized to approve and issue such subpoenas on behalf of the Commission. Service of such subpoenas shall be the responsibility of the party requesting such subpoenas.

15. <u>Hearing Exhibits</u>

- A. Parties and attorneys should, if possible, stipulate as to the admissibility of documents prior to the hearing.
- B. The use of electronic technology, USB drives, CD's, DVD's, etc. is acceptable and encouraged for voluminous records. If the Commission members will need their laptop to view documents, please notify the Hearing Officer prior to your hearing.
- C. If providing hard copies, voluminous records need not be copied for everyone but, if portions of records are to be referred to, those portions should be copied for everyone.
- D. If a document is to be referred to in a hearing, copies should be available for each Commission member, the Hearing Officer, the Commission's General Counsel, opposing attorney, and the court reporter (12 copies).
- E. Index exhibits/documents for easy reference.

F. Distribute exhibit/document packages at the beginning of the hearing to minimize distractions during the hearing.

16. Administrative Costs

The Commission is authorized, pursuant to Ala. Code § 34-24-381(b) and Ala. Admin. Code r. 545-X-3-.08(9) and (10), to assess administrative costs against the Respondent if he or she is found guilty of any of the grounds for discipline set forth in Ala. Code § 34-24-360. The Board of Medical Examiners [X]has / []has not given written notice of its intent to seek imposition of administrative costs in this matter.

17. Appeals

Appeals from final decisions of the Medical Licensure Commission, where permitted, are governed by Ala. Code § 34-24-367.

DONE on this the $\frac{11}{1000}$ day of FEOrUARY, 2023.

THE MEDICAL LICENSURE COMMISSION OF ALABAMA

By:

E-SIGNED by Craig Christopher, M.D. on 2023-02-22 16:34:16 CST

Craig H. Christopher, M.D. its Chairman

Distribution:

- Honorable William R. Gordon (incl. Administrative Complaint)
- Rebecca Robbins
- Respondent/Respondent's Attorney
- E. Wilson Hunter
- Aaron L. Dettling

This Administrative Complaint is a public document under Alabama law. The Medical Licensure Commission of Alabama makes this document available on its web site as a service to the public.

The matters set out in the Administrative Complaint are allegations. The licensee who is the subject of this Administrative Complaint has the right to a hearing, at which the Alabama Board of Medical Examiners may present evidence supporting the allegations. If the allegations are substantiated, the Medical Licensure Commission of Alabama may impose sanctions on the licensee's license to practice medicine in Alabama.

BEFORE THE MEDICAL LICENSURE COMMISSION OF ALABAMA

ALABAMA STATE BOARD OF	
MEDICAL EXAMINERS,	
Complainant,	
-	

v.

TARIK YAHIA FARRAG, M.D.,

Respondent.

CASE NO.: 2023-023

ADMINISTRATIVE COMPLAINT AND PETITION FOR SUMMARY SUSPENSION OF LICENSE

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COMES NOW the Alabama State Board of Medical Examiners (hereinafter "the Board"), by and through its counsel, and submits this Administrative Complaint and Petition for Summary Suspension of License, to summarily suspend and revoke or sanction TARIK YAHIA FARRAG, M.D.'s (hereinafter "Respondent") medical license under Ala. Code § 34-24-361(e).

JURISDICTION

1. On or about January 23, 2013, Respondent, TARIK YAHIA FARRAG, M.D., was issued license number MD.32237, to practice medicine in the state of Alabama. He has maintained an Alabama medical license since 2013 and was licensed at all times material to this complaint.

FACTS

2. On or about January 23, 2023, a representative of the Federation of State Medical Boards ("FSMB") contacted the Board to report that Respondent had submitted forged documents in connection with his application for privileges within the Sarasota Memorial Health Care system ("Sarasota"), which operates one or more health care institutions. According to the FSMB representative, during the credentialing process, a representative of Sarasota had contacted J. Drew Prosser, M.D., Residency Program Director, Department of Otolaryngology, August University Medical College of Georgia, to verify the details of Respondent's residency. Respondent had represented to Sarasota that he completed three years of residency under Dr. Prosser; however, when contacted, Dr. Prosser informed Sarasota that Respondent had been terminated for professionalism issues after Program Year 1.

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3. Dr. Prosser identified four fraudulent documents created by Respondent that were falsely attributed to Dr. Prosser. These documents were submitted by Respondent to Sarasota in connection with his application for privileges. In addition, Respondent created a fake email address that he attributed to Dr. Prosser, and Respondent corresponded with Sarasota using this fake email address as if he were Dr. Prosser. The fraudulent documents contained statements attributed to Dr. Prosser, as well as signatures of Dr. Prosser, which were all fraudulent. Moreover, Dr. Prosser stated that the training certificate submitted by Respondent to Sarasota, which purported to be a certificate from the Medical College of Georgia at Augusta, had been altered.

4. Based on these allegations, the Board reviewed Respondent's submissions in connection with his application for a certificate of qualification and license to practice medicine in Alabama. On or about January 14, 2013, Respondent submitted Appendix B to his certificate of qualification ("COQ") application, which purports to be a "Certificate of Post Graduate Education Training." Under Ala. Code § 34-24-70(a)(2), a foreign medical graduate such as Respondent must complete three (3) years of post-graduate education to obtain a COQ. The document submitted to the Board by Respondent states that Respondent had completed "3(+)" years of post-graduate training from "7 (July) 2009 to June 6, 2012." The document answers "No" to three questions regarding, generally, any suspensions, probation, or limitations occurring during Respondent's residency. The document purports to be signed by "Stil Kountakis," who is identified in the

document as the "Residency Training Program Director." All of the substantive information on this document is handwritten. Upon information and belief, this document is fraudulent.

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5. Because Respondent had not completed three years of post-graduate training as required by Alabama law, he did not qualify for a COQ at the time he applied in January 2013.

CHARGES

6. The Board has investigated Respondent and has concluded that there is probable cause to believe that he has violated Ala. Code § 34-24-360.

COUNT ONE – FRAUD IN APPLYING FOR A CERTIFICATE OF QUALIFICATION AND LICENSE TO PRACTICE MEDICINE

7. On or about January 14, 2013, TARIK YAHIA FARRAG, M.D., committed fraud in applying for and procuring a certificate of qualification and a license to practice medicine in the state of Alabama when he submitted one or more fraudulent documents in connection with his application for a certificate of qualification, in violation of Ala. Code § 34-24-360(1).

COUNT TWO – FRAUD IN APPLYING FOR A CERTIFICATE OF QUALIFICATION AND LICENSE TO PRACTICE MEDICINE

8. On or about January 14, 2013, TARIK YAHIA FARRAG, M.D., committed fraud in applying for and procuring a certificate of qualification and a license to practice medicine in the state of Alabama when represented that he had completed three years of postgraduate training at Georgia Health Sciences University when, in fact, he had not, in violation of Ala. Code § 34-24-360(1).

COUNT THREE - UNPROFESSIONAL CONDUCT

9. On or about November 28, 2022, and continuing through December 31, 2022, TARIK YAHIA FARRAG, M.D., committed unprofessional conduct when he fraudulently impersonated J. Drew Prosser, M.D., Residency Program Director at the Augusta University Medical College of Georgia, in connection with his application to obtain or renew privileges at the Sarasota Memorial Healthcare System, a healthcare institution, in violation of Ala. Admin. Code R. 545-X-4-.06 and Ala. Code § 34-24-360(2).

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COUNT FOUR -- UNPROFESSIONAL CONDUCT

10. On or about November 28, 2022, and continuing through December 31, 2022, TARIK YAHIA FARRAG, M.D., committed unprofessional conduct when he knowingly made one or more false and fraudulent statements in his application to obtain or renew privileges at the Sarasota Memorial Healthcare System, a healthcare institution, in violation of Ala. Admin. Code R. 545-X-4-.06(16) and Ala. Code § 34-24-360(2).

WHEREFORE, the foregoing premises considered, the Alabama State Board of Medical Examiners respectfully requests that the Medical Licensure Commission, pursuant to its authority under Ala. Code §§ 34-24-361(f) and 41-22-19(d), immediately suspend the license to practice medicine in Alabama of TARIK YAHIA FARRAG, M.D., without a hearing, and order that he immediately cease and desist from the practice of medicine in the State of Alabama and surrender to the Commission, or a designated agent, his license to practice medicine.

Further, the Board requests that the Commission set a hearing on this Administrative Complaint, and order that TARIK YAHIA FARRAG, M.D., appear and answer the allegations contained in this Administrative Complaint. The Board requests that, at the conclusion of the hearing, the Commission revoke the license to practice medicine of Respondent, assess the maximum fine, and/or take such other actions as the Commission may deem appropriate based upon the evidence presented for consideration.

The Board is continuing the investigation of the Respondent and said investigation may result in additional charges being prepared and filed as an amendment to this Administrative Complaint. The Board requests that administrative costs be assessed against Respondent pursuant to Ala. Code § 34-24-381 and Commission Rule 545-X-3-.08(12)(e).

This Administrative Complaint is executed for and on behalf of the Board by its Executive Director pursuant to the instructions of the Board as contained in its resolution of February 16, 2023, a copy of which is attached hereto and incorporated herein.

EXECUTED this 21st day of February, 2023.

William M. Perkins Executive Director ALABAMA STATE BOARD OF MEDICAL EXAMINERS

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E. Wilson Hunter General Counsel ALABAMA STATE BOARD OF MEDICAL EXAMINERS P.O. Box 946 Montgomery, AL 36101-0946 Telephone # (334) 242-4116 whunter@albme.gov

STATE OF ALABAMA)

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MONTGOMERY COUNTY)

Before me, the undersigned, personally appeared William M. Perkins, who, being by me first duly sworn, deposes and says that he, in his capacity as Executive Director of the Alabama State Board of Medical Examiners, has examined the contents of the foregoing complaint and petition and affirms that the contents thereof are true and correct to the best of his knowledge, information and belief.

William M. Perkins

Executive Director ALABAMA STATE BOARD OF MEDICAL EXAMINERS

SWORN TO AND SUBSCRIBED before me this the 21st day of February, 2023.



Notary Public My commission expires: 4/14/2023

STATE OF ALABAMA MONTGOMERY COUNTY

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AFFIDAVIT

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Before me, the undersigned, personally appeared William M. Perkins, Executive Director of the Alabama State Board of Medical Examiners, who, being by me first duly sworn deposes and says as follows:

The Alabama State Board of Medical Examiners in session on February 16, 2023, a quorum of the members of the Board being present, conducted an investigation into the medical practice of TARIK YAHIA FARRAG, M.D. At the conclusion of the discussion, the Board adopted the following resolution:

Tarik Y. Farrag, M.D., Panama City, FL After consideration of investigative information, the Credentials Committee recommended that an Administrative Complaint and Petition for Summary Suspension of Medical License be filed with the Medical Licensure Commission. The motion was adopted without objection.

I further certify that the foregoing resolution was adopted by the Alabama State Board of Medical Examiners on the 16th day of February, 2023.

William M. Perkins Executive Director **ALABAMA STATE BOARD OF MEDICAL EXAMINERS**

SWORN TO AND SUBSCRIBED before me this the 21st day of February, 2023.



Notary Public My commission expires: 4/14/2023