Dear Professor Ogilvie, Faculty, Students and Staff:

Thank you for sharing the petition in support of removing the name of Weiser Hall. Please accept my apologies for not responding sooner. This is a very serious matter and I wanted to take the time to consider it from many perspectives and get advice from others.

I appreciate the insights and advice I have received from you and from other faculty, staff, students and members of the broader U-M community, including alumni. There are many complex issues at play here, including the intersection of our university values and support for our academic mission.

I share your condemnation of Regent Weiser’s misogynistic and violent comments against elected state officials. I, along with Provost Collins, Dean Curzan, and many other university leaders, have expressed publicly our vehement disagreement with his remarks, which do not represent the values or beliefs of the university.

As I have considered this issue, I have worked to frame the decision in terms of our core values. One bedrock principle is free speech, which we must uphold even when we find speech offensive. Another is promoting civil discourse — to find common ground even with those with whom we disagree.

One of the most challenging aspects of controversies about building names is that individuals’ lives and their legacies are complex and sometimes even contradictory. While Regent Weiser’s recent comments in no way reflect our values, he has done much good upholding democratic values as our nation’s Ambassador to Slovakia and as a philanthropist. Over several decades, he and his family have demonstrated extraordinary support for the academic mission of our university, including a broad array of initiatives ranging from research into democracy and diplomacy to food allergies, diabetes, and student support on all three U-M campuses. In addition, he has served U-M as regent since 2016.

There are other complexities to consider when it comes to any gift to the university. As you may know, the naming of Weiser Hall was part of a gift agreement with Ron and Eileen Weiser, made years before he was elected to the Board of Regents. When campus facilities are named to recognize a donor, the naming is part of a negotiated gift agreement, which is a contract between the donor and the university. It is important to all those who enter into agreements with the university that we maintain our reputation for honoring our contracts. In addition, were we to decide to violate the contract and remove his name from a building, we would be obligated to return the associated gift.

Finally, our naming policy, updated in 2020, makes the university’s position clear: “The university is committed to retaining the name of each facility, space, and street (collectively referred to in this paragraph as a “facility”) bearing a donor-designated name or honorific name. The name is intended
to remain for the life of the facility.” While I can envision circumstances where the actions of a
donor could bring such disrepute to the university that we would consider the abrogation of a gift
agreement, I do not think the particular circumstances here reach that level.

Having considered these factors and weighed the difficult questions they raise, I have determined
that I will not recommend to the Regents that they violate the gift agreement and change the name of
Weiser Hall. I have opted to continue to build on the shared ground with Regent Weiser in support of
core mission work of the university and will continue to assert university values when there is
disagreement.

I appreciate that this decision may be disappointing, but I do believe it is the right one for the
University.

Thank you again for sharing your concerns.

Sincerely,

[Signature]

Mark S. Schlissel, M.D, Ph.D.
President