MONTANA
STATE UNIVERSITY

August 17, 2026

Commissioner Clayton Christian
Office of the Commissioner of Higher Education
560 North Park Avenue
Helena, Montana 59620-3201

Dear Commissioner Christian:

This is a request for the Board of Regents to confirm the recommendation of an honorary degree to Mike Reynolds, to be awarded at Montana State University's (MSU) commencement ceremony in the Fall 2026. Mike was recommended by the MSU Honorary Degree Committee and Faculty Senate leadership voted in favor of this honorary degree recommendation.

Mike Reynolds (Honorary Doctor of Arts):
A native of Bozeman, Mike's connection to Montana State University runs deep. He is the son of Creech Reynolds, a longtime MSU music professor and the namesake of Reynolds Recital Hall. As a gifted young musician, Mike earned admission to the prestigious Curtis Institute of Music and went on to become the founding cellist of the internationally acclaimed Muir String Quartet. Over a distinguished career spanning four decades, he has performed more than 2,000 concerts worldwide, appearing at venues such as the White House, Carnegie Hall, Amsterdam's Concertgebouw, and the Sydney Opera House. His recordings have earned some of the highest honors in classical music, including a Grammy Award, Grammy nomination, Grand Prix du Disque awards, and numerous international recognitions. He also previously received an honorary doctorate from Rhode Island College.

Despite achieving international acclaim, Mike has remained deeply committed to Montana and Montana State University. In 1989, he founded the Montana Chamber Music Festival and later helped establish the Montana Chamber Music Society, bringing world-class musicians and performances to communities across the state. Through these efforts, thousands of Montanans have had access to extraordinary cultural experiences without leaving Montana. Just as importantly, he has consistently worked with MSU students, providing masterclasses, mentorship, and opportunities to engage directly with some of the world's finest musicians. Faculty and community leaders have noted that his influence on the cultural life of Montana is difficult to overstate.

Mike's most far-reaching contribution may be through the organization he co-founded, the Classics for Kids Foundation. Established in response to the decline of music education programs, the foundation provides matching grants for quality

Office of the President
216 Montana Hall
P.O. Box 172420
Bozeman, MT 59717-2420
www.montana.edu

Tel 406-994-2341

string instruments to schools serving young people, particularly in rural and underserved communities. Since its founding, the organization has supported more than 500 music programs in all 50 states and helped place thousands of instruments into the hands of students who otherwise may never have had the opportunity to study music. Supporters ranging from former U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice to leaders in higher education and philanthropy have highlighted Mike's vision, leadership, and dedication to expanding educational opportunities through music.

Throughout his career, Mike has represented the very best of Montana. He has excelled on the international stage while never losing sight of the values and community that shaped him. Whether serving as a professor and Director of the School of Music at Boston University, inspiring generations of students, supporting youth music education nationwide, or returning repeatedly to Montana to enrich the cultural and educational life of our state, he has demonstrated a sustained commitment to service, excellence, and leadership.

The purpose of an honorary doctorate is to recognize individuals whose achievements and contributions bring distinction to the institution and whose lives serve as an inspiration to others. Michael Reynolds exceeds those standards in every respect. His extraordinary artistic accomplishments, dedication to education, commitment to expanding opportunities for young people, and enduring service to Montana make him an exceptionally deserving candidate for this honor. Awarding him an Honorary Doctorate would not only recognize a remarkable career but also celebrate a lifetime of service that reflects great credit upon Montana State University and the State of Montana.

Sincerely,



Brock F. Tessman
President