

**Agendum
Oakland University
Board of Trustees Formal Session
February 7, 2025**

**APPROVAL OF HONORARY DEGREE FOR BRENT WIRTH
A Recommendation**

1. Division and Department: Academic Affairs, Office of the Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs and Provost.

2. Introduction: In accordance with Article IX of the Bylaws of the Board of Trustees, honorary degrees may be awarded by the Board of Trustees in recognition of distinguished accomplishment and service within the scope of the arts and letters, sciences, professions, and public service as recognized and supported by the University. The awarding of honorary degrees reaffirms Oakland University's scholarly, creative, and humanitarian values and ties the University to the community at large.

Mr. Brent Wirth, President and CEO of Easterseals-MORC, exemplifies the level of achievement and service this honorable award is meant to recognize, as evidenced by his visionary leadership in improving the health and wellness of our community, his dedication to higher education, and his tireless advocacy for the education and training of mental health professionals. Under his leadership, Easterseals-MORC has grown significantly, expanding its impact on the lives of individuals with disabilities and mental health and their families across Michigan. In the process, he has impacted Oakland University, the profession of Social Work, and the lives of our students.

Under Brent's guidance, Easterseals-MORC has grown from a \$30 million organization serving 4,000 residents to a \$144 million organization reaching 21,000 individuals annually. His leadership was instrumental in Easterseals-MORC Michigan's certification as a community behavioral health clinic and in securing an impressive \$15 million gift from philanthropist MacKenzie Scott in 2020. This funding has directly contributed to expanding mental health and addiction services in Oakland County, addressing both a growing demand for services and gaps in the availability of care.

His innovative approach to leadership and commitment to higher education is further exemplified by his partnership with Oakland University. This collaboration, initiated through Brent's service on Oakland University's Social Work Community Advisory Board, is a model for how educational institutions and nonprofits can effectively partner. What began as a brainstorming session to address employee shortages in the mental health sector has evolved into a transformative opportunity that will shape graduates' educational experiences and career paths for years.

Approval of Honorary Degree for Brent Wirth
Oakland University
Board of Trustees Formal Session
February 7, 2025
Page 2

Through this partnership, Easterseals-MORC provides scholarships and paid internships to OU graduate students, nurturing a new generation of mental health professionals while ensuring that the most vulnerable community members receive the care they need. His forward-thinking strategies not only enhance the operational capabilities of Easterseals-MORC but also contribute significantly to the development of our future leaders in mental health care. To date, twenty-one Master of Social Work students have benefited from this initiative. Beyond his professional achievements, Brent is recognized for his compassion and dedication to those he serves. His work has profoundly touched individuals, families, and the broader community, making him a true visionary and an outstanding candidate for this honor.

We recommend that Brent Wirth be awarded a Doctor of Humane Letters, *honoris causa* from the College of Arts and Sciences at the 2:00 PM ceremony on Thursday, May 1, 2025.

3. **Previous Board Action:** The Board of Trustees periodically awards honorary degrees at its Formal Sessions.
4. **Budget Implications:** None.
5. **Educational Implications:** The awarding of honorary degrees is an established tradition in academe, by which the University reaffirms its scholarly, creative, and humanitarian values and its ties to the wider community.
6. **Personnel Implications:** None.
7. **University Reviews/Approvals:** The Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs and Provost has recommended approval of the recipient to receive an Honorary Degree.
8. **Recommendation:**

RESOLVED, that the Board of Trustees award the honorary degree of Doctor of Humane Letters *Honoris Causa* to Brent Wirth.

Approval of Honorary Degree for Brent Wirth
Oakland University
Board of Trustees Formal Session
February 7, 2025
Page 3

9. Attachments: None.

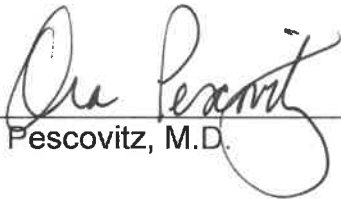
Submitted to the President

on 1/28/25, 2025 by



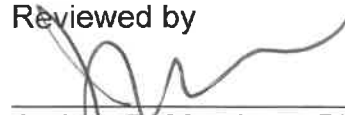
Kevin J. Corcoran, Ph.D.
Interim Executive Vice President for
Academic Affairs and Provost

Recommended on 1/30, 2025
to the Board for Approval by



Ora Hirsch Pescovitz, M.D.
President

Reviewed by



Joshua D. Merchant, Ph.D.
Chief of Staff and
Secretary to the Board of Trustees