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April 1, 2019

Janet H. Brown,
Executive Director
Commission on Presidential Debates
2600 Virginia Ave NW, Suite 400
Washington, DC 20037

Dear Ms. Brown,

It is with great honor that the University of Michigan, in close collaboration with our Gerald R. Ford School of Public Policy and other units on our campus, submits an application to the Commission on Presidential Debates to host a debate during the 2020 election season.

As one of the country's premier public universities, the University of Michigan is poised as an ideal venue for a presidential debate. Our 200-year history is steeped in a tradition of public service. Not only are we the alma mater of President Gerald R. Ford, but also it was on the very steps of the Michigan Union that presidential hopeful John F. Kennedy delivered his impromptu speech in 1960 announcing his vision of what would become the Peace Corps. The tradition of public service and public engagement is at the core of the mission of the University of Michigan.

We stand at a unique moment in our nation's history. These are challenging times, with fractious political discourse, gridlock and partisanship in our nation's capital, and an increasing lack of trust in institutions everywhere. In response to this particular moment, the university has launched an event series that looks to bring together people from divergent vantage points to tackle significant policy issues with the goal of deeper understanding and to search for common values. In the last year, "Conversations Across Difference," hosted by the Ford School, has brought together policy experts,

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such as Neera Tanden and William Kristol, and policy makers, such as Representatives Debbie Dingell and Fred Upton, to engage in substantive dialogue of this country's pressing issues. The university's commitment to the importance of such dialogue for the future of our democracy underpins our interest in hosting a Commission on Presidential Debates event.

Our interest in hosting a debate also stems from the CPD's relationship with the National Democratic Institute. Ford School staff and students have held positions at NDI, and, perhaps more importantly, NDI's mission – to support emergent and nascent democratic processes – reflects the fundamental values and pedagogical mission of the university in general and, as an institution focused on shaping the policymakers of the future, of the Ford School in particular.

I am aware of the logistical challenges and significant financial implications for the host institution. As an institution that routinely hosts 110,000 visitors to our campus many weekends every fall, we are fully cognizant of the challenges such an undertaking entails. We look forward to further conversations with the CPD to ensure the appropriate fit for the CPD and the University of Michigan for an event of the caliber our nation deserves.

Thank you for consideration of our application.

Sincerely,



Mark S. Schlissel

President