

BLAKE E. KUZMA

AAUW of MICHIGAN

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STUDENT ADVISORY COUNCIL MEMBER

My name is Blake Kuzma and I am 18 years old. I come from a small town, called Canadian Lakes, which is halfway between Mt. Pleasant and Big Rapids. I went to high school at Chippewa Hills High School where I graduated as a National Honors Society member. I had never heard of the AAUWMI until my journalism teacher, Professor Christian, brought it to my attention and I was interested immediately. I always have been very passionate about the struggles that women face and my main way of dealing with those issues is writing. Joining the AAUWMI would give me the chance to finally reach a larger audience on issues that have been nagging at me for as long as I can remember and invoke change. I want to be a part of an organization that actually does something for women. An organization that improves self-worth and not diminish it. I feel that joining this organization will not only put me in a position where I can help other women, while also finding other women who can help me. I hope to gain a better sense of unity and empowerment within my university. I want to be a source of knowledge and hope for all. I want people to be impacted by what I do/say and in return, do the same for others. I excel in both written and spoken communication, whether it be small group communication or in front/between many people. I'm very creative and artistic so I can make displays that will not only be attractive, but contain impactful information. I have never been afraid of a challenge and thus am a master at the art of problem solving. In fact, if there is ever a conflict within the organization you will probably find me in the middle of it, because I will be playing the mediator

and hearing both sides of the story trying to find a solution. I am friendly and will adapt to any situation I find myself in. I always have been a leader and am good at not only managing my time, but people as well. An example of this is when I wrote a two hour play for my high school's drama club over the summer of my junior year and then proceeded to help produce the entire thing. This involved casting, making and setting up scenery, working with actors/actresses on their roles, making fliers, a trailer video to advertise the play, and then finally producing the play. Most, if not all, of these things received my help or were checked over by me before being distributed. It was an incredibly fulfilling experience I will never forget. As for the gender topic that concerns me the most, I would have to say the one at the very top of my list is how women are portrayed in advertising/marketing. It is infuriating for me. Women and girls of all ages receive thousands of subtle messages every day from companies that are constantly telling them they are not good enough. They prey on our insecurities, set impossible standards for us and then use those standards as a mold for what we "should" be. We obsess over numbers and waistlines and not our health and happiness. Women's bodies are portrayed as trophies and manipulated to fit this ideal. Girls are too skinny or too thick. No one can win in the game of perfection, and more importantly, no body wins. We are not MAC lipstick. We are not flawless Covergirls. We are strong, smart, beautiful and deserved to be portrayed as such.