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Michigan Students Selected for United States Senate Youth Program
Students to Participate in the First Online Program and to Receive \$10,000 Scholarship

February 22, 2021, Washington, D.C. —The United States Senate Youth Program (USSYP) announces that high school students Ms. Naina Maria Somya Agrawal-Hardin and Mr. Kenneth Gu will join Senator Debbie Stabenow and Senator Gary Peters in representing Michigan during the 59th annual USSYP Washington Week, to be held March 14 — 17, 2021. Naina Agrawal-Hardin of Ann Arbor and Kenneth Gu of Troy were selected from among the state's top student leaders to be part of the 104 national student delegation who will each also receive a \$10,000 college scholarship for undergraduate study. Due to the pandemic, the 2021 program will break ground as the first-ever fully virtual Washington Week, and is designed to be a highly interactive and exciting education and leadership forum for the nation's most outstanding student leaders.

The USSYP was created by Senate Resolution 324 in 1962 and has been sponsored by the Senate and fully funded by The Hearst Foundations since inception. Originally proposed by Senators Kuchel, Mansfield, Dirksen and Humphrey, the Senate leadership of the day, the impetus for the program as stated in Senate testimony is "to increase young Americans' understanding of the interrelationships of the three branches of government, learn the caliber and responsibilities of federally elected and appointed officials, and emphasize the vital importance of democratic decision making not only for America but for people around the world."

Each year this extremely competitive merit-based program brings the most outstanding high school students - two from each state, the District of Columbia and the Department of Defense Education Activity - to Washington, D.C. for an intensive week-long study of the federal government and the people who lead it. However, this year, the program will be held online. The overall mission of the program is to help instill within each class of USSYP student delegates more profound knowledge of the American political process and a lifelong commitment to public service. In addition to the program week, The Hearst Foundations provide each student with a \$10,000 undergraduate college scholarship with encouragement to continue coursework in government, history and public affairs. All expenses for Washington Week are also provided by The Hearst Foundations; as stipulated in S.Res.324, no government funds are utilized.

Naina Agrawal-Hardin, a senior at Washtenaw International High School, serves as the Student Government Senior Class representative and equity coordinator. She was nominated by Senator Gary Peters to the U.S. Senate Page Program for the Summer 2020 session. She serves on Washtenaw County's Youth Commission, where she works on juvenile justice reform and other solutions to the racial, economic, and environmental injustices facing local youth. She is a National Merit Scholarship semifinalist and has been recognized by the Sierra Club of Huron Valley for impactful local work with the Washtenaw County Climate Strike Coalition. Nationally, she works to combat climate change as an organizer with the Sunrise Movement and to end sexual violence in schools as an organizer with Know Your IX. Naina has been featured and published in several local, national and international media outlets such as USA Today, NPR, Teen Vogue, Al Jazeera, and The Hill.

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UNITED STATES SENATE YOUTH PROGRAM

2021 Michigan Delegate Announcement
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Page -2-

Kenneth Gu, a senior at Troy High School, serves as the Senior Class president. He has been an appointed student representative on the Troy School District Superintendent Student Advisory Board since 2018 and serves as the co-president of the Troy High chapter of DECA, a student organization focused on business and entrepreneurship. He has volunteered on Congressional and Senate campaigns, has helped coordinate a gardening club with his school and a local nursing home, provides support at a local hospital, and tutors his peers as part of the National Honor Society. An avid runner, Kenny was elected cross country captain for the Fall 2020 season by his peers, has finished in the Top 50 of the U.S. Biolympiad, a nationwide competition among biology students, and was runner-up in the Michigan Brain Bee, a statewide neuroscience competition.

Chosen as alternates to the 2021 program were Ms. Khushi Patel, a resident of Wayne, who attends Wayne Memorial High School and Ms. Savannah Mauk, a resident of Grand Ledge, who attends Grand Ledge High School.

Delegates and alternates are selected by the state departments of education nationwide and the District of Columbia and Department of Defense Education Activity, after nomination by teachers and principals. The chief state school officer for each jurisdiction confirms the final selection. This year's Michigan delegates and alternates were designated by Michael F. Rice, Ph.D., Superintendent of Education.

During the program week, the student delegates will attend online meetings and briefings with senators, the president, a justice of the Supreme Court, leaders of cabinet agencies and senior members of the national media, among others.

In addition to outstanding leadership abilities and a strong commitment to volunteer work, the student delegates rank academically in the top one percent of their states among high school juniors and seniors. Now more than 5,800 strong, alumni of the program continue to excel and develop impressive qualities that are often directed toward public service. Among the many distinguished alumni are: Senator Susan Collins, the first alumna to be elected U.S. senator; Secretary of Transportation and former Mayor of South Bend Indiana, Pete Buttigieg; former Senator Cory Gardner, the second alumna to be elected U.S. senator and the first to be elected to the U.S. House of Representatives; former New Jersey Governor Chris Christie, the first alumna to be elected governor; former Chief Judge Robert Henry, U.S. Court of Appeals for the Tenth Circuit; former Ambassador to West Germany Richard Burt, former presidential advisors Thomas "Mack" McLarty and Karl Rove. Additional notables include former Lt. Governor of Idaho David Leroy, Provost of Wake Forest University Rogan Kersh, military officers, members of state legislatures, Foreign Service officers, top congressional staff, healthcare providers and other university educators.

Members of the U. S. Senate Youth Program 2021 annual Senate Advisory Committee are: Senator Tammy Baldwin of Wisconsin, Democratic Co-Chair; Senator James Lankford of Oklahoma, Republican Co-Chair; Advisory Members: Senator Thomas R. Carper (D-DE); Senator Christopher S. Murphy (D-CT); Senator Kyrsten Sinema (D-AZ); Senator Ron Wyden (D-OR); Senator Richard Burr (R-NC); Senator Kevin Cramer (R-ND); Senator Mike Lee (R-UT) and Senator Roger F. Wicker (R-MS). Each year, the Honorary Co-Chairs of the program are the vice president of the United States and the Senate majority and minority leaders.

For more information please visit: www.ussenateyouth.org
