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### **A short story on finishing High School as a Class of 2020 Senior**

When the pandemic first arrived in the United States there were many questions surrounding how the country and its political officials would respond to the pandemic. Every single person had their own questions about how life in the United States would be impacted in their own personal life as the vast majority of people had never experienced such a life altering event. As an eighteen year old senior in high school, perhaps the biggest question in my mind was how the remainder of the school year would play out as well as how my graduation would be organized if even at all.

At the time of the 3rd week of March schools in Minnesota were still opened and unaffected by policy changes of the country, this also happened to be the week before our spring break. This is where everything took a change in my life, it was announced from the school superintendent that spring break was to be extended a week to cover for a "14-day Quarantine". At this time the state had yet to pass statewide rules but those were days from creation as Minnesota widely adopted the idea of a "14-day Quarantine." Within my high school the pandemic was widely regarded as something not serious and getting an "extra" week of spring break was something widely celebrated within the school. These closures also meant the end of spring break trips that were planned through any academic program which personally led to me losing my senior trip to New York with the band program, especially as it was the hotspot of the nation at the time.

Within the coming weeks the pandemic numbers continued to rise, and the “14-day Quarantine” was no longer a 14 day quarantine but now an indefinite ending quarantine, it was now that many of my peers became more concerned with the gravity of the situation. As our Senior Prom was just two weeks after spring break that was almost immediately canceled after the extension of the quarantine. Classes were to resume but be moved online after another week, giving all of our teachers just a week to convert their entire lesson plans to online formats. Questions regarding the future of graduation were now surfacing which were a real concern for me as I felt as if my entire life up to this point was leading up to this graduation and losing it would be incredibly saddening.

Within the coming weeks the school district proposed many different ways we could have a graduation ceremony and still be safe, many of which were dismissed by local and state officials as too unsafe and risky to attempt. It was just weeks before graduation and every senior of my class wanted a real graduation and to be able to safely celebrate the grand accomplishment they had worked so hard for, when the school district came with one final plan to have an in person graduation.

Our principle had created a plan where every class of 2020 senior would be able to walk across the stage while still remaining socially distant. The plan was to have a drive through graduation where we parade around the parking lot in cars distanced from each other, while teachers stood social distant waving to us as we passed by as the final goodbye that would normally be had. At the end of the line would be a stage where you would be able to get out of your car and receive your diploma book in a socially distant manner as well as get your picture taken on the stage, and miraculously the

local and state officials approved of this manner of graduation. The story of my high school graduation was a very turbulent one with many twists and turns and unknowns but in the end I do have to say that I enjoyed the graduation very much and personally I think it was a bit more fun than sitting shoulder to shoulder for multiple hours before walking across the stage.