My name is Michael Korsh. I attended Hopkins High School for three years until graduating in 2018, and am currently a first-year student in the Medill School of Journalism at Northwestern University. I was as a member of *The Royal Page* (Hopkins High School’s student newspaper) for all three years of high school, first serving as a staff reporter, then managing editor, and finally as the paper’s editor-in-chief during my senior year. At the conclusion of my senior year, I was named the 2018 Minnesota High School Journalist of the Year.

Throughout my time on *The Royal Page,* I cannot stress enough how positively having student press rights has impacted me as a student journalist. As a sophomore in high school, I was initially nervous to begin reporting on events around the school. It seemed as though reporting on who won Student Government positions or the happenings of certain clubs were the only topics I was comfortable with. However, after learning about student press rights in my introductory Journalism class, I began to feel empowered to write stories about more impactful topics in my school and community. In my first year as a reporter, I wrote an in-depth story that examined “fight culture”: the apparent glamorization and promotion of fights within my school. While it didn’t necessarily place the school in a positive light, my knowledge of student press rights enabled me to feel confident about reporting the truth. While my writing has grown since then, that story remains one of my proudest because it has taught me so much about my own potential as a journalist.

As I assumed leadership roles on *The Royal Page* my junior and senior years, student press rights’ meaning to me began to change. Nevertheless, it remained crucial to my role as a journalist. As editor-in-chief, I used my engagement from the First Amendment to empower and enable other students, who may have felt as I did initially, to become more active journalists. Together, our staff tackled tough subjects, including the exclusion of a male student from the girls’ dance team, school security procedures, and most tragically, a string of suicides at the junior high schools within our district. While each of these stories were not always positive, our student press rights empowered me and my staff to tell these stories of our community accurately and fairly.

While my time at Hopkins High School has ended, student press rights’ impact on me as a journalist has not. As a first-year student in the journalism program at Northwestern, my experiences from high school have made me feel more comfortable reporting on sensitive topics, such as anti-Semitism in the wake of the shooting at Tree of Life synagogue in Pittsburgh. While it may take other journalism students some time to feel confident reporting at that level, I feel that my empowerment in high school has put me at an advantage in this way.

By expanding student press rights now, you’re making an investment for the future. Now that I’ve graduated, my status as a journalist is changing. The professional world of journalism can be daunting to some. But thanks to my experiences in high school, I feel prepared and confident to be a successful journalist and report on stories that can have meaningful consequences.