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# Joni Sussman

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March 20, 2023

Chair Cheryl Youakim,  
Republican Lead Ron Kresha  
Members of the Education Finance Committee.  
100 Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Blvd.  
Saint Paul, MN 55155

Dear Members,

As a child of two Holocaust survivors, I am frequently asked to speak to students about my parents' concentration camp experiences and have found the students to be extremely interested in hearing these stories. The students ask astute questions, some of which apply to their own lives - how one overcomes adversity and moves on, the experience of coming to America as a refugee, the importance of standing up for others who are being bullied, and other important topics.

My father was imprisoned in Dachau. He was liberated by the Americans, who were his heroes ever after. From him I learned the value of living in a free country - America! - and the importance of voting, a right and responsibility he took seriously and something which I discuss with students. From my mother, who was imprisoned in Stutthof concentration camp, and who was a witness to her own mother's murder at the hands of the Nazis - and after whom I'm named - I learned the importance of viewing oneself as a survivor rather than as a victim, a valuable lesson that I also impart to kids.

I have been speaking in schools for over twenty years and find both the students and their teachers eager to absorb the lessons of this terrible period in history.

This important legislation will help to build kids of strong character who know the difference between right and wrong and understand the importance of standing up for others. I encourage you to pass this legislation, which is in the best interest of the children of Minnesota.

Cordially,

Joni Sussman  
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