Mathew Kleiner "Create Change: Health Leadership Award" 2020 Awardee: Maya Cutforth '20

Cornell Health is pleased to announce the 2020 recipient of the "Create Change: Health Leadership Award": Maya Cutforth. Maya was honored for her campus leadership in addressing safety within sorority and fraternity life at Cornell. The "Create Change" award was established to honor and carry forward the legacy of Mathew A. Kleiner '93. It is awarded to Cornell University students who demonstrate the courage and commitment to create change that will enhance the health of the Cornell community, as Matt Kleiner did as a student leader at Cornell.

As the president of the Cornell Panhellenic Council in 2019, Maya boldly championed an unprecedented step for sorority life at Cornell: a complete ban on attending mixers at fraternities until safety and safe drinking related demands for reform were met.

In an Op-ed in the *Cornell Daily Sun* on November 1, 2019, Maya stated "I believe it is our obligation as Panhellenic members and Cornell students to do anything in our power to improve safety at parties. If you are a member of Panhellenic, please consider your role in this. Unsafe partying may seem inconsequential, but it has real consequences on the Cornell community." Maya then organized a Panhellenic vote on freezing mixers for the foreseeable future. The proposal was voted down. Maya faced tremendous backlash for her proposal. In the face of the controversy and personal attacks, Maya maintained that it was students' responsibility to reflect and consider what would create meaningful change.

Maya's courageous, moral leadership demanded that the Cornell community pay attention to what happens below the surface of the fun and friendships that Greek life promises. She insisted that Cornellians confront the very serious problems that underlie the policies, systems and safeguards that are in place for a reason.

Additionally, as a facilitator for the Intergroup Dialogue Project (IDP), Maya has devoted time and energy to understanding systems of power and privilege; these insights guided her challenges to entrenched norms that exist. Despite the significant personal and social costs, Maya spoke out and took public action that no other students were willing to risk, and in doing so attempted to promote a more just path within Greek Life. She demonstrated strength and ethical leadership on issues of health and safety, especially as they relate to alcohol use and sexual violence at Cornell.

Maya's desire to reform the Greek system and the (polarizing) action steps she put forward were a remarkable example of student leadership. Her push for change—immediate and systemic—was a powerful call to action for Cornell University as a whole. It is in this spirit of inspiration, leadership and community impact that we award Maya Cutforth, '20 with the Matthew A. Kleiner '93 Create Change Award.

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