I am the mother of an 18 year old that was killed by a 16 year old driver, with another teen passenger, driving distracted at approximately 10:30 to 10:40 p.m., in Minot, North Dakota on May 20th.
My son was a pedestrian, crossing a street on a well-lit intersection after getting some food with a friend after completing his shift at work. If the Graduated Driver's License stages were changed to account for the dangers of teen drivers that are permitted to drive at night with other teen passengers, his death, and so many more, could have been prevented. Simple changes to these rules can save so many lives, including the teens we have driving now and those that are getting ready to enter that phase of their young lives. It is imperative that North Dakota recognize the dangers of teen drivers and enact these changes.
In North Dakota, drivers the age of 14 to 19 account for only 5% of all drivers, yet, are behind the wheel in 20% of all crashes. Additionally, North Dakota is only 1 of 5 states that does not have a limit on passengers during the Intermediate stage of license.

IMPORTANT Teen Driving Statistics

- The fatal crash rate for 16 -17 year olds is nearly twice as high at night.
- States with nighttime restrictions in place have reported up to a 60% reduction in crashes during the restricted hours.
- Only 14% of the miles driven by 16 – 17 year old drivers occur between 9 p.m. and 6 a.m., yet this time period accounts for 32% of fatal crashes for this group.
- Among teen nighttime crashes, 57% happen between 9 p.m. and midnight.
- Studies show that teen drivers, from the ages of 16 – 19, are 4 times more likely to get into a crash than older drivers.
- Per mile driven, the fatal crash rate of 16 – 19 year olds is 4 times higher at night than it is during the day.
- Teen drivers' risk of a crash increases 44% with just one teenage passenger, and quadruples with 3 or more teenage passengers.
- Car crashes are the leading cause of death for teenaged drivers
- 2/3 of all teenage passenger deaths happen in cars driven by another teenager.
- 6 out of 10 teen crashes involve driver distractions.
    - 15% due to interacting with one or more passengers
    - 12% due to using a cell phone
    - 10% due to looking at something inside of the vehicle
    - 9% due to looking at something outside of the vehicle
    - 8% due to singing/dancing to music
    - 6% due to grooming
    - 6% due to reaching for an object

One of the most dangerous sources of distractions for teen drivers, whether due to horseplay, loud music, rowdy behavior or peer pressure, is other teen passengers. 15% of teen driver crashes happen when the driver is interacting with other young passengers in the vehicle.
On average, 12% of teen driver crashes involved cell phone use in the moments leading up to the incident. Those same teens also failed to react more than half of the time before a rear-end collision.

- The risk of motor vehicle crashes is higher among 16-to 19-year-olds than among any other age group.
- The overwhelming majority (75 percent) of serious teen driver crashes are due to "critical errors," with the three common errors accounting for nearly half of these crashes: lack of scanning that is needed to detect and respond to hazards, going too fast for road conditions, and being distracted by something inside or outside of the vehicle.

- The majority of newly licensed teen drivers exit the learner's permit period with significant skill deficits, leading to a much higher risk of crashing compared with more experienced drivers. The most common types of crashes involve left turns, rear-end events, and running off the road.

Teenage Brain Development

- Judgement
    - The brain develops back to front. The last section to connect is the frontal lobe, which is responsible for reasoning, planning and judgment. Because the area that helps teens assess risks is still developing, speeding to beat a red light or texting while driving many not register as highly dangerous actions.
- Impulse Control
    - A teenager's brain is only about 80% developed. Regions responsible for suppressing impulses and weighing the consequences of actions are still under construction. Even among seemingly responsible teens, underage drinking is highly likely to result in drunken driving.
- Emotion
    - As the teen brain develops, differences in decision-making and judgement may occur in situations that are emotionally exciting or have high social impact. Teens take more risks behind the wheel in the presence of friends as compared to driving alone or with a responsible adult.
- Physical Changes
    - Physical changes, such as the reduction in gray matter, in the teen brain reflect experience and environment. Making mistakes is partly how the brain optimally grows. Teens are more likely to develop safe driving habits if parents regularly discuss and model appropriate behavior.