

To the House Transportation Committee

My name is Jennifer Deeter. I am a mother of 6 children and a former flight paramedic for Trinity First Response. I have been involved with EMS since 2002. We have witnessed serious bodily injury by impaired drivers for decades. I don't have any statistics to share with you, but I would seriously doubt if the number of incidents has declined with any significance. Part of this, in my opinion, is that the penalties and consequences for such incidents are so minor that it is not even a slight deterrent to refrain from driving under the influence.

It is known that alcohol and other substances decrease the inhibitions and impair the ability to make good decisions. Operating a vehicle while under the influence of any impairing substance needs to have stricter consequences, especially when it involves causing severe bodily injury to another. I have seen so many of these "accidents" and almost every time, the person who is at fault is not the one who suffers the most from their decision to get behind the wheel when they knew they shouldn't have. I've seen property damage, severe injuries, and unfortunately, loss of life.

The night I heard that Tyanna was in an accident my heart just sank. It had only been one year and about a week since our Bishop Ryan family had lost another wonderful soul, Mr. Christopher Brewer, to an impaired driver on Hwy 52. My daughter came into my room, crying uncontrollably, saying that Tyanna had been in an accident like Brewer. The pit in my stomach grew. With my career in flight, and my common sense of a mom, I told my daughter not to get too worried until we had actual details. Maybe she just had some broken bones, maybe a concussion, maybe nothing at all. It was devastating when we went to the hospital to find her broken, unresponsive, and intubated. Tyanna had suffered immense trauma that we would only go on to learn was so much worse than you could even tell from the outside.

Tyanna had several broken bones. Several. She had a massive head injury that required immediate surgery to release the pressure so that she could have a chance at life. Tyanna's face was so broken her mom told me that it would be easier to list the bones that were NOT broken than those that were.

This was a girl in the prime of her life. A high school senior... and one hell of a kid at that. Tyanna was/is a VERY high achiever. Whatever she did, she did it all the way and she was usually the best at it. That is not an exaggeration. Two of my daughters are her age and we have known Tyanna and her family for over 11 years. They played together when they were little, they played sports together all through high school, they did Homecomings, Proms, Friday football games, cheerleading, you name it. Not to mention that Tyanna's education was always top of her list too. Honestly, I don't know very many people who have been so dedicated and so successful at as many things as she has been. That is why it does not surprise me that she is doing so amazingly with her recovery. This event has forever changed her, and her family's lives from that day and for all their remaining days. Their memories of that night won't go away after 2.5 -5 years. The impact and the struggles will not go away after 2.5-5 years for Tyanna. And she is not the one who made the decision that caused this horrific event. She was driving home from work. She should have made it like every other night before.

I guess what I'm trying to convey is that the impact of something like this is so very immense and the consequences for it just do not match the enormity of heartache, anxiety, physical, emotional, or financial strain for the effected parties, for the innocent parties. What is there to deter anyone from making the same decision to drive impaired? What is there to deter this very same person from making the decision again if the punishment is so minor?

No, he didn't end her life. But he almost did. It's a miracle that he didn't. He did, however, take the life she was living prior to that night. He forever changed her future. I don't care how impaired you are, when you decide to get into a vehicle and get behind the wheel you KNOW that untoward events can happen. You are aware that you are doing the wrong thing. The brain may not be functioning at its highest level and making good decisions, but it IS still making decisions and sometimes those decisions have a devastating impact on someone else. Please change the law so that the punishment fits the crime.

Thank you.