

This is not your typical testimony and I hope this is one that sticks with you.

I cannot simply tell you my story, you will never truly understand until you have lived it. I need you to follow these directions in order to put yourself in my shoes. This will only take a minute, I need you to close your eyes and focus.

It's a normal Monday afternoon, you had a fun relaxing weekend and you are in a great mood. Imagine that you are doing your normal day to day task. As you follow your normal routine and finish your work for the day but you decide you want to spend some time with the person you love the most.

Think: where are you going? What are you doing? What are you feeling?

You had a wonderful time with the one you love the most and you are on your way to the safety of your home, you follow the rules of the road, you come to a red light and stop. As the light turns green all you feel is intense pain, burning in your eyes, blood covering you, and fear. You have yet to know that your loved one is dead and you are permanently injured.

Open. Your. Eyes.

Feel that devastation? Take that times a hundred and you still are not even close to what it is like to live in my shoes.

My name is Nicole Louthain and this is my story:

June 3rd, 2024 I stopped at Walmart on the way home from my daughters drum lessons, we were in and out. I came to a stop at the red light on Gateway in Grand Forks when a drunk driver was going an insane speed over the limit, trapping me in the car and begging strangers to save my baby. When I awoke in the hospital, the accident felt like an unreal bad dream... I didn't realize that it was my reality.

I remember gushing blood, trying to move, and screaming. Its the same scream I heard in the MRI machine. It's the same scream that jolts me awake panting in fear in the middle of the night but the real damage was watching my limp daughter trying to be saved by strangers putting her on the pavement to do CPR... little did those strangers know, she was brain dead on impact.

Katarina is the only child I could have, this worked out great because she was the best child I could ask for. She was kind, loving, caring, and had such strong empathy for others. Katarina was eager to learn, did gymnastics and taekwondo, played the drums and violin, played baseball, was so passionate about music, and loved reading. Katarina loved to learn, was so curious, and had an understanding of someone beyond her age of six years. Her smile was infectious and she genuinely loved unconditionally for all humans and animals. I miss snuggling on the couch with her three fur brothers while watching some Discovery channel about different wildlife. This beautiful girl went into cardiac arrest when we were hit and her brain stem was dislocated, somehow bystanders were there to do CPR on my sweet baby long enough for help to come.

When I came back to consciousness at the second hospital (Sanford), some tough calls that a parent shouldn't have to make were made. Katarina was on a breathing machine, she was starting to decline, we then signed a DNR, and then I spent thirty painful minutes listening to the pitter-patter of her heart spew to silence. I would never see my only child ever again.

It is so hard to turn this testimonial towards my injuries when all I care about is stricter DUI laws that will save future children but the fact that these laws are so lenient is a disgrace to this country and everything we stand for...

After the accident was terrifying because I was awake and cognizant the whole time, yet don't remember a single thing about it. In the rear-end accident, the airbags did not deploy and I hit my head pretty hard. I got a TBI resulting in a brain bleed going from 3mm to 9.5mm, somehow the bleeding stopped but my husband was told I was going to die. Not only do I have a brain bleed but I have sensory issues, whiplash, a severe concussion, constant nausea, dizziness, constant headaches, constant falling, can't sleep in fear I won't wake up, spine/back pain, panic attacks, have a hard time processing information, have short term memory loss problems, have vision problems, and couldn't walk after the accident without a walker. I also have to take anxiety medication, seizure medication, and see many doctors (ophthalmologist, concussion specialist, neurologist, speech therapist, occupational therapist, and psychiatrist). I mean it when I say my life was picture-perfect before this accident, I was happy. Now I have to get over 30 needles in my skull every 10 weeks and a shot in my thigh every month, on top of all my oral medications and yet I am still in pain, have several side effects from the crash, and somehow have to figure out the point of living without my child... my purpose... my everything.

So yes, I was severely injured and the sentencing for an impaired driver in this state who permanently injured me emotionally, mentally, and physically. The amendment to this bill, in my personal opinion, is still TOO lenient. I lost everything at the hands of an impaired driver who walked out without a scratch, yet I did nothing wrong and he walks free pleading not guilty. I have an abundance of proof but he made an insulting low bond the day my daughter died. He hugs his kids, when he should be behind bars.

This is not a demand of any citizen, this is a plea to do better North Dakota. If I was there now, I would be on my knees begging all of you to be the change our country needs.

Please... #JusticeForKatarina

Nicole Louthain