

Testimony in Support of HB1503 – “Tyanna’s Law”
North Dakota House Transportation Committee
Representative Dan Ruby, Chairman
February 4, 2025

Chairman Ruby and Members of the House Transportation Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of HB1503. My name is Angela Christianson and I am writing you in support of HB1503 on behalf of our friend Tyanna Weeks. This bill is not just about changing a legal classification—it’s about recognizing the true impact of driving under the influence and ensuring that our justice system reflects the severity of these crimes.

Tyanna was an 18-year-old student who had just begun building her future. She was driving home from her shift at the hospital when a drunk driver struck her, leaving her with catastrophic injuries. She suffered numerous broken bones, a collapsed lung, and a severe traumatic brain injury that robbed her of the use of her left arm. She spent months in a rehabilitation hospital, enduring grueling therapy, learning how to navigate a life forever changed.

But the injuries weren’t just physical. Tyanna lost experiences she will never get back—her senior softball season, her high school graduation, her prom, and her dream of going to college. While she fights daily to reclaim pieces of the life that was stolen from her, the driver who caused this devastation violated his bond order twice before finally being sentenced to just 2.5 years in prison. With good behavior, he may serve even less time.

Let’s put that into perspective. In North Dakota, I recently read about a woman who vandalized a car and, because the dollar amount of damage met a certain threshold, she was charged with a Class C Felony—the same charge given to the drunk driver who shattered Tyanna’s body and forever altered her future. How can we justify valuing property damage the same as irreparable harm to a human life?

HB1503 is a necessary step toward real accountability. Elevating the penalty for DUI with serious bodily injury from a Class C Felony to a Class B Felony sends a clear message that we will no longer treat these offenses as minor infractions. North Dakota must stop being reactive and start being proactive when it comes to preventing and punishing DUI offenses.

I urge you to support HB1503 and stand up for victims like Tyanna. It is time for change. Thank you for your time and consideration and humbly request a “Do Pass” on HB1503 from this committee.

Sincerely,
Angela Christianson
(701) 240-7423

