

Testimony
HB1503 Chairman Dan Ruby
House Transportation Committee
January 6th, 2025

My name is Tayler Christianson, and I am the current Miss North Dakota's Teen within the Miss America's Teen Organization. I am here today to testify in support of North Dakota HB1503. As a titleholder, we are encouraged to have a social impact initiative that is personal to us. That initiative became crystal clear on January 31st, 2024, when my best friend since grade school, Tyanna, was hit head-on by a drunk driver going the wrong way on the highway.

Tyanna suffered many broken bones, a collapsed lung, a severe traumatic brain injury, and was left with the inability to fully use her left arm. She spent a month in the ICU and another five months in several different rehabilitation facilities in Colorado and Nebraska. She was robbed of finishing her senior year of high school, her senior softball season, prom, graduation, and starting college when she had planned.

It broke my heart to learn that the 18-year-old drunk driver responsible for this tragedy was facing only a Class C felony, with a maximum penalty of five years for this crime. In fact, after violating his bond order twice, he was finally sentenced to a mere 2.5 years in prison. This does not seem like a just sentence for the crime committed.

In North Dakota, we fall short when it comes to addressing crimes such as this. Unfortunately, this wasn't the first time Tyanna or I have been affected by the epidemic of drunk driving. Just one year prior to Tyanna's accident, our beloved volleyball coach and English teacher, Christopher Brewer, was taken from us by a drunk driver near Velva, ND.

We cannot continue to allow these tragedies to happen without consequence. HB1503 is a necessary step toward justice for victims like Tyanna and accountability for those who choose to drive under the influence. Increasing the penalty from a Class C to a Class B felony sends a clear message that North Dakota values the lives of its citizens and will not tolerate reckless decisions that destroy them. I am on a mission to eradicate impaired driving and though HB1503 seems like a small step, it is small steps like this that get us to our ultimate goal.

I urge you to recommend a "do pass" for HB1503 and ensure that no other family, no other friend group, and no other community has to suffer the way we have. It is time to prioritize the safety of our roads and the justice that victims deserve. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,
Tayler Christianson
Miss North Dakota's Teen 2024