

February 5, 2025

Honorable Chairman and honorable members of the Committee,

My name is Michele Belfiore and I am the grandmother of Tyanna Weeks; the victim who is the inspiration of HB 1503 which I strongly support and ask all of you to support.

On January 31, 2024, I received the tragic news from my daughter Brianna, that Tyanna, her daughter and my granddaughter, had been in a terrible car accident. I could hear the pain and worry in my daughter's voice and her brokenness when she saw Tyanna's car, and I kept thinking "no, no please God no." I called my dear friend, JoAnn to have her start a prayer chain and arranged for a priest from Tyanna's school to meet us at the hospital,

We found out that Tyanna was struck head on by a vehicle driving up the wrong side of the highway and that the young man had consumed large amounts of alcohol and was also high on drugs. We learned that Tyanna was nonresponsive, and the impaired driver was walking around (despite having broken legs) and conversing with law enforcement, apparently oblivious to the life-threatening injuries he'd inflicted upon Tyanna. The prognosis from the ER was very grim, but Tyanna always had so much faith, and such a love for Jesus, we wouldn't consider life without her and turned to Jesus in prayer.

Tyanna was a very accomplished young woman looking ahead to a beautiful, bright future. She was a senior and worked hard to achieve excellence in all she did. She had a deep love for Jesus, the Catholic Church and her family and was excited and preparing to attend U of Mary. Since Tyanna was born, there was this quality about her that I can only describe as a light that illuminated from her. She was always such a joy and as she grew, she taught me so many things through her goodness and love for Jesus and others. (She's still teaching me.) She has always been my special angel and has always had a beautiful soul.

Tyanna was driving home from work that evening and had done nothing wrong; yet she has suffered so much. The young man who did this to her only received 2 ½ years in prison. The law needs to be changed. Tyanna has had to learn to walk, swallow, had multiple surgeries and has pain everyday of her life. Her mother had to be away from home and her other 2 children for almost 6 months to be with Tyanna out of state for rehab. They are both amazing, faithful and hardworking and I am so proud of them, but Tyanna has permanent injuries that will be lifelong because this man decided to drive impaired. The law is unjust and must be changed. That impaired man did take my granddaughter's life and future she'd planned. He left her with permanent injuries for the rest of her life and he will be out in just 2 ½ years. This is not just. Please support HB 1503.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Michele M. Belfiore