

Good morning Chairwoman Larson and Committee Members,

My name is Shayna Monson. I am testifying today in support of Senate Bill 2290.

Back in 2015, I was a 21-year-old college student living my life to the fullest. I really loved learning and also, socializing with friends. I was at the top of my class, with a 4.25 GPA, and I only needed 14 more credits to graduate with a major in Biology and a minor in Chemistry. This was at the University of North Dakota. I was preparing to take the MCAT exam to follow my dream, which was to continue onto medical school and become an anesthesiologist.

In the early morning of June 27, 2015, my hopes and dreams were taken away from me. I was hit head-on by a drunk driver, who was driving the wrong way on the Bismarck Expressway. My two passengers, one being my roommate and her best friend, were killed upon the impact. I received a major traumatic brain injury. At the time of the accident, the drunk driver's blood alcohol level was .295.

When they arrived at the hospital, my family was told I had a 10% chance of surviving. If I did live, I would most likely be paralyzed and blind, or even worse, I could possibly remain in a vegetative state for the rest of my life. Days later, the doctors even told them that if I hadn't improved in one year and was to develop pneumonia, they should just let me die rather than try to save me.

My first memory was waking up about 3 months after the accident, and not being able to move. I had no idea where I was or what happened to me. The right side of my body was paralyzed, which was devastating because I'm a right-handed person. To help me, a lot of hospitalization and therapy was needed.

After the accident, I spent more than 10 months recovering at St. Alexius Hospital, here in Bismarck, Kindred and Craig Hospitals, both in Denver, and at Quality Living Inc., located in Omaha. I basically had to relearn all daily functions.

After several surgeries and months of physical therapy, I learned how to walk again. With speech therapy, I was eventually able to talk and swallow. With occupational therapy, accomplishing simple things, like getting in and out of bed by myself, bathing, and brushing my teeth took months of hard work. I continued physical, speech and occupational therapy after I returned home to Dickinson for 2 ½ years. I could not live alone so I lived with my mom for six years.

Now, almost 10 years later, I have completed my college degree. I am currently participating in the Clinical and Translational Sciences program at UND. This would not be possible without the special accommodations allowed through Disability Services. My professors allow me to take tests by myself in a quiet room. They also allow me extra time to take the tests and sometimes, more than one day. I use a smart pen to record lectures so I can listen to them again later. I can only focus on my studies for short periods of time due to the exhaustion it creates in my brain.

I am living on my own, but I'm not completely independent. Due to issues I have with my vision and slow reaction times, I'm not able to drive. I hope to someday be able to drive alone again. For now, I rely on public transportation. My social life has been hugely impacted, too. I spend most of my time alone in my apartment. My friends have all moved on with their lives. Most are married with kids and work the jobs of their dreams. Finding a job has been next to impossible for me. I've had several job interviews but continually get passed up. My life is drastically different than what it could have been without the accident occurring. I know God has a plan for me and I continue to work on moving forward.

I encourage you to please approve the Senate Bill 2290 for victims of drunk driving accidents, like me, and for the friends and families that have been or will be impacted as well.

Thank you for your time and have a good rest of your day.

Shayna Monson