

Chairman Schauer and members of the Government and Veterans Affairs Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony regarding changes to the Silver Alert notification system as defined in Senate Bill 2098.

My name is Lisa Liken Monroe, and I am the daughter of Lloyd Liken, a Vietnam War veteran, a medic, who went missing on the evening of Thursday, November 16, 2023, after attending a church supper. The experiences I'm about to share with you have motivated me to become an advocate for expansion of the Silver Alert eligibility criteria.

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The newspapers piled up at the front door of Dad's apartment were one of the first signs something was very wrong. My husband Chad and I found the papers when we went to pick up Dad for supper and the symphony on the evening of Saturday, November 18, 2023. That evening was the beginning of five months of living hell for the two of us and our family and friends.

When we realized Dad was missing, one of our first actions was to request that a Silver Alert be issued. It was a devastating blow to our family to find out Dad did not qualify because he did not have a medical diagnosis of dementia or Alzheimer's. We had recently learned that on two occasions law enforcement officers had helped him find his way home, but even that did not qualify him for a Silver Alert.

When Dad told us he had received assistance from law enforcement, he attributed it to problems with his night vision or problems that were a result of injuries sustained in Vietnam. We talked to him about the possibility that getting confused while driving was a sign of dementia, but he reassured us he was fine. He must have been in denial at that time, but he

had never given us any reason to believe what he said to us was anything less than 100 percent true.

Soon after, we learned our concerns were valid. When Dad disappeared that Thursday evening, dementia was the obvious reason, but, as I mentioned, it had not yet been diagnosed by a doctor.

Without the Silver Alert to support our efforts, Chad and I and some friends began a desperate search, driving day and night, looking in all the places he might likely go. Then we reached out for assistance, and what was to become an aggressive search process was soon underway.

With direction from the Badlands Search and Rescue Service, dozens of volunteers panned out in Bismarck and Mandan, soon stretching farther out into surrounding counties and to specific areas of the state where possible sightings were being reported. Volunteers also reported in from Montana, South Dakota and Minnesota.

Shortly after the formal search began, we received some staggering news. In the early morning hours of Friday, November 17 – before Chad and I even knew Dad was missing – a McLean County deputy sheriff spotted Dad traveling southbound on US Highway 83 near Wilton. Dad was driving slowly, but his driving was not erratic and, according to state law, that did not provide justifiable cause for the deputy to stop him. It was difficult for us to learn about this “what if” moment, but it was also reassuring to know where Dad had been and, most importantly, that he was alive and well at that point.

Chad and I want you to know that law enforcement officers assisted us in the search wherever and whenever possible. We greatly appreciate the assistance provided by many city, county, state and tribal agencies. I do, however, want to commend one office in particular. Even though McLean County is the largest county in our state, the Sheriff’s Office traveled every single road in the county, looking for Dad. As our team of volunteers continued to search, the sheriff assured us Dad was not in McLean County, and volunteer search efforts could be best utilized elsewhere.

And so the search continued. By car, by boat, by plane and even using drones – we worked as a team to search every possible field, body of water, dead-end road and gulley. Badlands Search and Rescue used mapping software to create a detailed search map that allowed volunteers to opt in on an app on their phones. Then at the end of the day, Badlands Search and Rescue tracked and recorded the movement of every single volunteer, ensuring our efforts were thorough, but not duplicated. Just counting the searches recorded on this app, our dedicated team of volunteers logged more than 15,000 miles, committing their own time and resources to search for Dad! This total of 15,000 miles does not include volunteers who searched without the app and many people who followed “Looking for Lloyd Liken” on Facebook, then paid close attention to their surroundings and reported travel in North Dakota and beyond in our Facebook page comment section.

Our efforts were also supported by local media outlets that ran many stories about the search and billboards in the Bismarck area and beyond that raised awareness Dad was missing. Search volunteers posted flyers wherever they could find a bare spot on a business window in the towns they searched and in gas stations and convenience stores close to highways and on the interstate.

Whether we were talking to a farmer or a rancher we met along a county road, to a rural family that answered a knock on their door or to a group of people at a local coffee shop – search members were asked the same question over and over again:

WHY HASN'T THERE BEEN A SILVER ALERT FOR THIS MISSING MAN???

The answer was always the same. Sadly, he did not qualify.

Our search continued into December until the point when Chad and I became concerned about the safety of the compassionate men and women who had given so much to help us find Dad. So we suspended the search due to the weather. December, January, February, March and April – the winter stretched on, long and full of heartache. Our days were filled with “where” and “what-if” questions. If a Silver Alert had gone out, would Dad still be with

us? We kept our sanity by developing plans to renew the search as soon as the weather allowed.

And finally one day, we got the answer we so badly needed. It wasn't the answer we wanted, but we could finally lay Dad to rest. His frozen body was found near his vehicle on April 14, 2024, when a farmer checked his fields in Wells County.

It would be easy to let this immeasurable grief take over our lives, but Chad and I are doing our best to follow Dad's example and live life to the fullest. We're also committed to fulfilling a promise we made to ourselves soon after finding out Dad was ineligible for a Silver Alert. That promise was to do everything in our power to broaden North Dakota's Silver Alert search criteria so that senior citizens like Dad don't fall through the cracks ever again and to do everything in our power to spare other families from the misery and grief Chad and I have endured.

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Chairman Schauer and members of the Government and Veterans Affairs Committee, thanks again for allowing me to share this experience with you. I respectfully ask you to vote "do pass" on Senate Bill 2098.

That concludes my testimony, but I am available to answer any questions you have.