

2025 HOUSE TRANSPORTATION

HB 1503

2025 HOUSE STANDING COMMITTEE MINUTES

Transportation Committee Room JW327E, State Capitol

HB 1503
2/6/2025

Relating to punishment for causing injury while operating a vehicle under the influence of alcohol; and to provide a penalty.

10:00 a.m. Chairman D. Ruby opened the hearing.

Members Present: Chairman D. Ruby, Vice Chairman Grueneich, Representatives Christianson, Dressler, Finley-DeVille, Frelich, Hendrix, Johnston, Koppelman, Maki, Morton, Osowski, Schatz
Members Absent: Representative Kasper

Discussion Topics:

- Current penalties
- Inmate housing

10:00 a.m. Representative Macy Bolinske introduced the bill and submitted testimony #35730 and #35886.

10:05 a.m. Brianna Weeks testified in favor and submitted testimony #35654.

10:08 a.m. Taylor Christianson testified in favor and submitted testimony #35706.

10:12 a.m. Chairman D. Ruby closed the hearing.

10:19 a.m. Representative Johnston moved a Do Pass.

10:19 a.m. Representative Frelich seconded the motion.

Representatives	Vote
Representative Dan Ruby	Y
Representative Jim Grueneich	Y
Representative Nels Christianson	Y
Representative Ty Dressler	Y
Representative Lisa Finley-DeVille	Y
Representative Kathy Frelich	Y
Representative Jared Hendrix	Y
Representative Daniel Johnston	Y
Representative Jim Kasper	AB
Representative Ben Koppelman	Y
Representative Roger A. Maki	Y
Representative Desiree Morton	Y
Representative Doug Osowski	Y
Representative Mike Schatz	Y

10:20 a.m. Motion passed 13-0-1.

10:20 a.m. Representative Hendrix will carry the bill.

Additional written testimony:

Nicole Louthain submitted testimony in favor #35125.

Kari Keller submitted testimony in favor #35282.

Katelyn Denne submitted testimony in favor #35348.

Shayne Monson submitted testimony in favor #35619.

Connie Monson submitted testimony in favor #35620.

Angela Christianson submitted testimony in favor #35679.

Baelee Reiter submitted testimony in favor #35713.

Hailee Fletcher submitted testimony in favor #35728.

Michelle Belfiore submitted testimony in favor #35812.

10:21 a.m. Chairman D. Ruby closed the meeting.

Janae Pinks, Committee Clerk

REPORT OF STANDING COMMITTEE
HB 1503 ([25.0671.02000](#))

Transportation Committee (Rep. D. Ruby, Chairman) recommends **DO PASS** (13 YEAS, 0 NAYS, 1 ABSENT AND NOT VOTING). HB 1503 was placed on the Eleventh order on the calendar.

This is not your typical testimony and I hope this is one that sticks with you.

I cannot simply tell you my story, you will never truly understand until you have lived it. I need you to follow these directions in order to put yourself in my shoes. This will only take a minute, I need you to close your eyes and focus.

It's a normal Monday afternoon, you had a fun relaxing weekend and you are in a great mood. Imagine that you are doing your normal day to day task. As you follow your normal routine and finish your work for the day but you decide you want to spend some time with the person you love the most.

Think: where are you going? What are you doing? What are you feeling?

You had a wonderful time with the one you love the most and you are on your way to the safety of your home, you follow the rules of the road, you come to a red light and stop. As the light turns green all you feel is intense pain, burning in your eyes, blood covering you, and fear. You have yet to know that your loved one is dead and you are permanently injured.

Open. Your. Eyes.

Feel that devastation? Take that times a hundred and you still are not even close to what it is like to live in my shoes.

My name is Nicole Louthain and this is my story:

June 3rd, 2024 I stopped at Walmart on the way home from my daughters drum lessons, we were in and out. I came to a stop at the red light on Gateway in Grand Forks when a drunk driver was going an insane speed over the limit, trapping me in the car and begging strangers to save my baby. When I awoke in the hospital, the accident felt like an unreal bad dream... I didn't realize that it was my reality.

I remember gushing blood, trying to move, and screaming. Its the same scream I heard in the MRI machine. It's the same scream that jolts me awake panting in fear in the middle of the night but the real damage was watching my limp daughter trying to be saved by strangers putting her on the pavement to do CPR... little did those strangers know, she was brain dead on impact.

Katarina is the only child I could have, this worked out great because she was the best child I could ask for. She was kind, loving, caring, and had such strong empathy for others. Katarina was eager to learn, did gymnastics and taekwondo, played the drums and violin, played baseball, was so passionate about music, and loved reading. Katarina loved to learn, was so curious, and had an understanding of someone beyond her age of six years. Her smile was infectious and she genuinely loved unconditionally for all humans and animals. I miss snuggling on the couch with her three fur brothers while watching some Discovery channel about different wildlife. This beautiful girl went into cardiac arrest when we were hit and her brain stem was dislocated, somehow bystanders were there to do CPR on my sweet baby long enough for help to come.

When I came back to consciousness at the second hospital (Sanford), some tough calls that a parent shouldn't have to make were made. Katarina was on a breathing machine, she was starting to decline, we then signed a DNR, and then I spent thirty painful minutes listening to the pitter-patter of her heart spew to silence. I would never see my only child ever again.

It is so hard to turn this testimonial towards my injuries when all I care about is stricter DUI laws that will save future children but the fact that these laws are so lenient is a disgrace to this country and everything we stand for...

After the accident was terrifying because I was awake and cognizant the whole time, yet don't remember a single thing about it. In the rear-end accident, the airbags did not deploy and I hit my head pretty hard. I got a TBI resulting in a brain bleed going from 3mm to 9.5mm, somehow the bleeding stopped but my husband was told I was going to die. Not only do I have a brain bleed but I have sensory issues, whiplash, a severe concussion, constant nausea, dizziness, constant headaches, constant falling, can't sleep in fear I won't wake up, spine/back pain, panic attacks, have a hard time processing information, have short term memory loss problems, have vision problems, and couldn't walk after the accident without a walker. I also have to take anxiety medication, seizure medication, and see many doctors (ophthalmologist, concussion specialist, neurologist, speech therapist, occupational therapist, and psychiatrist). I mean it when I say my life was picture-perfect before this accident, I was happy. Now I have to get over 30 needles in my skull every 10 weeks and a shot in my thigh every month, on top of all my oral medications and yet I am still in pain, have several side effects from the crash, and somehow have to figure out the point of living without my child... my purpose... my everything.

So yes, I was severely injured and the sentencing for an impaired driver in this state who permanently injured me emotionally, mentally, and physically. The amendment to this bill, in my personal opinion, is still TOO lenient. I lost everything at the hands of an impaired driver who walked out without a scratch, yet I did nothing wrong and he walks free pleading not guilty. I have an abundance of proof but he made an insulting low bond the day my daughter died. He hugs his kids, when he should be behind bars.

This is not a demand of any citizen, this is a plea to do better North Dakota. If I was there now, I would be on my knees begging all of you to be the change our country needs.

Please... #JusticeForKatarina

Nicole Louthain

To Whom It May Concern,

I am writing to express my unwavering support for the proposed legislation aimed at enhancing the penalties for individuals who cause injury while operating a vehicle under the influence of alcohol. This issue is not just a matter of legal reform; it is a matter of justice, compassion, and the protection of our communities.

Every year, countless lives are shattered due to the reckless actions of those who choose to drive under the influence. The aftermath of such decisions extends far beyond the immediate physical injuries; it ripples through families, friends, and entire communities. Victims endure not only the physical pain and suffering but also the emotional trauma that can last a lifetime. Families are left to navigate the overwhelming grief, anger, and confusion that follow these preventable tragedies.

We must recognize that alcohol impairs judgment and endangers lives. When someone chooses to drive while intoxicated, they are not just risking their own life; they are jeopardizing the lives of innocent individuals who may cross their path. The consequences of these actions can be devastating and often irreversible. The scars left on victims and their families serve as a constant reminder of that fateful decision.

This proposed legislation is a crucial step toward holding offenders accountable for their actions. By establishing stricter penalties for those who cause injury while driving under the influence, we send a powerful message: that our society values the sanctity of life and will not tolerate reckless behavior that endangers others. It is imperative that we advocate for stronger repercussions, not only to deter potential offenders but also to provide a sense of justice and closure for the victims and their families who suffer in silence.

As we consider this legislation, let us remember the faces and stories of those who have been affected. Let us channel our collective grief into action, ensuring that no family has to endure the pain of losing a loved one or witnessing their suffering due to the thoughtless choices of others. Together, we can work towards a future where our roads are safer, and the lives of our citizens are protected.

I urge you to support this legislation with the passion and urgency it deserves. Let us stand together in solidarity for the victims, their families, and the communities that have been forever altered by these tragic incidents. It is time for change, and it starts with us.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Kari Keller

Dear House Transportation Committee,

My name is Katelyn Denne and I am writing in **support** of HB 1503, regarding the strengthening of penalties for DUI with serious bodily injury. There is no reason that we shouldn't have stricter laws regarding DUI with bodily injury, and to be candid, this legislation still does not go far enough. Those that choose to drive impaired often end up being able to go back to a somewhat normal life, while those that are victims of impaired drivers have life-long physical, mental and emotional issues. I have seen this first-hand in our community in Minot. A local senior in high school was hit by an impaired driver. He received a five-year sentence, first serving two and half years with three years of supervised probation after that. Tyanna, the victim, has endured a year of medical procedures, numerous doctor appointments, has had to spend what should have been her first year in college, re-learning how to do basic human functions. There are permanent, life-long issues that she will have to live with. The punishment does not fit the crime. Another horror story our community experienced was a man driving under the influence, crashing into a local liquor store, his car hitting an employee of the store. Again, he received a five-year sentence, two years in jail and three years supervised probation. The victim endured an ICU stay and continued doctoring and physical therapy for her injuries. The punishment does not fit the crime. This legislation is critical to holding individuals accountable for driving under the influence and causing serious bodily harm. The State of North Dakota should send the message that we take driving under the influence seriously. Please support this legislation to show victims of these crimes that their lives matter and bring some justice to the victims and their families.

Thank you for your service on the transportation committee and your public service.

Katelyn Denne

Minot, ND

Hello, Chairman Ruby and Committee Members! My name is Shayna Monson. I'm going to write this statement in support of HB 1503 (Tyanna's Law).

Back in 2015, I was a 21-year-old college student living my life to the fullest. I really loved learning in my college classes and also, socializing with friends outside of my classes. 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 all 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 one of my college roommates and the other, being 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. This is almost four times the legal limit, which is unsatisfying.

I don't remember anything, but 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 developed pneumonia, they should just let me die rather than try to save me.

My first memory was waking up about three months after the accident. I was not 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 were needed.

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

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 tasks, 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 two and a half 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 for grad school. This would not be possible without the special accommodation 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 that 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 they're working the jobs of their dreams. Finding a job has been next to impossible for me. I've had several job

interviews, but I 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 no matter what.

Considering my story and others who've also gone through this torture, I encourage you to please approve the HB 1503 (Tyanna's Law) Bill for victims of drunk driving accidents, like me, and for friends and families that have been in the past or will be impacted in the future as well.

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

Chairman Ruby and Members of the Committee:

My name is Connie Monson and I'm in full support of HB 1503, "Tyanna's Law".

On June 27, 2015, my daughter, Shayna, was hit head-on by a drunk driver driving the wrong way on Bismarck Expressway. Her two passengers, Taylor (Shayna's college roommate) and Abby (Taylor's best friend) were killed upon impact. Shayna received a major traumatic brain injury. The blood alcohol content of the drunk driver at the scene of the accident was .295.

Shayna had just turned 21, Taylor was days away from turning 22, and Abby was 22. These three young ladies had very promising futures ahead of them...they were so full of life! Even though Shayna survived the accident, her life as we all knew it died with her two passengers.

Shayna graduated at the top of her class at Dickinson High School. She was excelling at UND at the time of the accident. She had a 4.25 GPA and was 14 credits away from graduating with a major in Biology and a minor in Chemistry. Her dream was to become an anesthesiologist, so she was preparing to take the MCAT exam. The drunk driver took that dream away from her.

Shayna had a personality that lit up the room when she walked in. She made friends quickly and easily. Her smile was radiant. She always put others first and offered to be the designated driver when she and her friends went to the bar...and that is exactly what she was doing the night of the accident. Her impact on people was made evident to me as I looked around the ICU waiting room at St. Alexius Hospital at the 50+ friends that sat waiting to hear updates on her dire condition. It was evident when friends and family filled the hospital chapel a day after the accident, holding hands and praying for Shayna's recovery.

Shayna's immediate prognosis was very critical. Her father and I were told she had a 10% chance of living. And if she lived, she would most likely be paralyzed and blind, or worse, she would remain in a vegetative state for the rest of her life. The doctors waited for 48 hours to move forward with medical procedures as they truly didn't believe she would live that long. It was agonizing to wait out those 48 hours!

We witnessed miracles every day in Shayna's recovery. She spent more than 10 months in facilities in Bismarck, Denver and Omaha. After she came home to Dickinson, she continued therapies for 2 ½ years. She was like a newborn baby living in an adult body. Her brain had to relearn every bodily function. It took three months for her brain to "wake up" enough to begin moving forward with physical, occupational and speech therapy. It took weeks before she could do so much as hold her head up. She spent hundreds of grueling hours regaining strength and teaching her brain to walk and talk again.

We are nearing the 10 year anniversary of that dreadful night. Shayna was eventually able to obtain her bachelor's degree. She is currently participating in the Clinical and Translational Sciences program at UND. None of this would be possible however without special accommodations through Disability Services. Our hope is that someday she will be able to obtain a job that is medically related, as her original dream was to work in the medical field. However, her ability to focus for long periods of time without becoming exhausted is difficult. She has applied for many jobs over the years but continuously gets overlooked.

Shayna is living alone but is not completely independent. Vision issues and slow reaction times do not allow her to drive. Her social life is minimal, next to non-existent. Her friends have moved on in life and making new friends is challenging. So as I said, her life as we all knew it before the accident died at the hands of the drunk driver on June 27, 2015.

Elizabeth Barfoot-Clarke, a journalism professor at Louisiana Christian University, has spent hours conducting research regarding drunk driving cases in the United States. Her research discovered North Dakota has one of the highest drunk driving related arrests per capita in the nation. And yet, we have some of the most lax laws in the nation.

In Shayna's situation, the drunk driver was charged with injury or death resulting from 39-08-01.2 (criminal vehicular injury), which is currently a Class C felony. Her case was the first to be heard after the 2013 North Dakota legislature approved stricter DUI laws. The judge in her case knew that he was setting precedence for future cases and due to additional charges, the drunk driver was sentenced to 5 years in prison, which is the maximum allowed. I understand every situation is different, but serving 5 years in prison compared to the life changes that Shayna has/is experiencing is not comprehensible.

Knowing that we can't stop individuals from driving under the influence, and knowing that our current jail/prison systems are faced with housing shortages, my hope is that facing potential consequences of a Class B felony could be a deterrent for some individuals. We'll never be able to eliminate this problem completely, but if we can prevent even one more person from experiencing such devastating, life changing experiences, then this change is worth it!

I ask for your support and move HB 1503 forward with a do pass recommendation. Thank you!

Testimony
House Bill No. 1503
House Department of Transportation
February 5, 2025

Chairman Dan Ruby and members of the Department of Transportation Committee,
My name is Brianna Weeks, and I am the mother of Tyanna Weeks, who was severely injured by an impaired driver. I am here today to express my full support for House Bill 1503, which was introduced at the department's request.

On January 31, 2024, Tyanna was driving home after working a shift at the hospital. What should have been a routine drive turned into a nightmare when she encountered a drunk driver head on. Tyanna suffered life-threatening injuries, including a collapsed lung, a broken femur, a broken ulna, multiple facial fractures, and a traumatic brain injury. She spent six months away from home in hospitals and recovery centers, undergoing numerous surgeries, with more to come. Her recovery is far from complete. Her new reality involves ongoing physical therapy, occupational therapy, speech therapy, and vision therapy on a weekly basis. She receives injections every 12 weeks to manage the spasticity in her left hand, which will never fully regain function. She has lost her peripheral vision, and experiences pain every day from headaches, inflammation, and intense body aches caused by the metal in her body. Tyanna will likely spend years in therapy, enduring countless doctor appointments and surgeries.

Everything I've shared with you today was not the result of an event, an occurrence, or an accident. It was a choice. A choice that has left Tyanna with a severe traumatic brain injury, a lifelong sentence for both her and our family.

Under North Dakota's current law, the individual responsible for this tragedy faced a maximum sentence of just five years in jail—only 1,825 days—for causing a lifetime of pain, injuries, and disabilities. I respectfully ask you to consider the magnitude and lasting impact of this crime. I fear that without change, more families will suffer the same fate, as our current laws are far too lenient.

**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

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

Testimony
House Bill No. 1503
House Department of Transportation
February 5, 2025

Chairman Dan Ruby and members of the Department of Transportation Committee,

My name is Baelee Reiter and I am writing you to support House Bill 1503. On July 31, 2013 I was 23 years old with 2 children , a 2 year old and 3 month old. We were walking back to our car from the enduro race at the fair when I was ran over by a drunk driver in the crosswalk. I thank God it was me and not my children. I suffered from broken bones, concussion, shattered jaw, stitches and contusions. I had multiple surgeries, therapies, and dental work. That was just initially. Now 10 years down the road I suffer from neurological , spine, neck, and joint issues. My career is being cut short because my body cant do it from the damage that was done.

The man who did this to me served 3 years. Since he was released he has been in and out of jail continuously committing crimes. 38 counts to be exact. Under North Dakota law the maximum serving time is 5 years. This is not enough. If the crimes committed do not require a longer sentencing , criminals will continue to drink and drive. So many victims are sentenced with a lifetime of challenges that they did not deserve. The state could and should increase punishment on these crimes. Thank you for your time.

Hailee Fletcher, BSN, RN
ICU Nurse
02/04/2025

My name is Hailee Fletcher, and I am an ICU nurse in Minot, ND. I have witnessed firsthand the devastating consequences of drunk and impaired driving. I am writing today to strongly support the implementation of harsher penalties for DUI offenders.

Every day, I care for patients whose lives have been shattered by someone else's reckless decision to drive under the influence. I have comforted parents, children, and close friends of my patients as they said goodbye to their loved one, a victim of a preventable crash. I have watched survivors endure excruciating pain, multiple surgeries, and lifelong disabilities—all because of an intoxicated driver who made the selfish choice to get behind the wheel.

The current penalties for DUI offenses do not reflect the irreversible harm they cause. Too often, offenders receive lenient sentences, only to repeat their actions without regard for the safety of others on the road. Tougher punishments, including longer license suspensions, mandatory ignition interlock devices, and especially increased jail time, are not just about justice—they are about deterrence and saving lives.

The emotional and financial toll of DUI-related crashes is immeasurable. Families are left with unpayable medical bills, lost income, and trauma that will never fully heal. How many more victims of DUI related crashes will I care for with only the slightest bit of hope of justice for them, and their family members? Strengthening DUI penalties sends a clear message: driving under the influence is not just a mistake—it is a crime with serious consequences.

As someone who has seen the worst outcomes of these avoidable tragedies, I urge you to take action. Lives depend on it.

Thank you for your time and commitment to protecting our communities.

Sincerely,
Hailee Fletcher, BSN, RN
ICU nurse
Email: jundty101@hotmail.com



North Dakota House of Representatives

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600 EAST BOULEVARD
BISMARCK, ND 58505-0360



Representative Macy Bolinske

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COMMITTEES:

Human Services
Political Subdivisions

Chairman Ruby and members of the House Transportation Committee, I'm Macy Bolinske, representative from District 40. I'm honored to represent my district and the great people of Minot.

House Bill 1503 raises the felony class for a DUI with bodily injury. This bill is quite simple and would allow a judge to sentence up to ten years rather than being limited to five if the situation calls for it. As it currently stands, if an individual is left disabled from a DUI accident, that perpetrator can only be sentenced to five years and is often times sentenced to even less to allow for a probationary period. You will also notice that the other change is to the minimum. We have added one day to the one year sentence to adhere to another section in century code for a Class B Felony. This was added by the recommendation of a local defense attorney to prevent this offense from being dropped to a misdemeanor. The reason I chose not to raise the minimum significantly is because I'm aware there is a wide range of cases that vary from minor to severe. This bill allows for a judge to use discretion while also providing justice for victims.

A quick google search would tell you that we have the second highest DUI arrest rate in the country. You could argue that is because of our high arrest rates and in part due to the hard work of our law enforcement. I thank them for all the tragedies they've prevented thus far. You could also blame those statistics on the fact that North Dakota tops the charts for binge drinking in the United States and 35 percent of fatal crashes in North Dakota are alcohol related. This legislation is not radical when you look to other states such as Texas and Georgia that have similar laws in place. Texas classifies it as an "intoxication assault," with a minimum of two years imprisonment and a maximum of 10. Georgia has a maximum of 15 years imprisonment depending on the severity of the case. Many states also have Ignition Interlock Systems to further deter these individuals from driving under the influence.

I'm passionate about this as it is a completely avoidable tragedy for many individuals across our state and continues to be a prevalent issue. The "why" for this bill comes from a story of a young lady in my community and I will let those here to testify tell that story. I ask for your support in offering justice for victims and continuing to show that North Dakotans don't have a tolerance for these 100% preventable injuries because of someone's decision to drive under the influence.

I ask for a DO PASS and I appreciate your support for HB 1503.

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

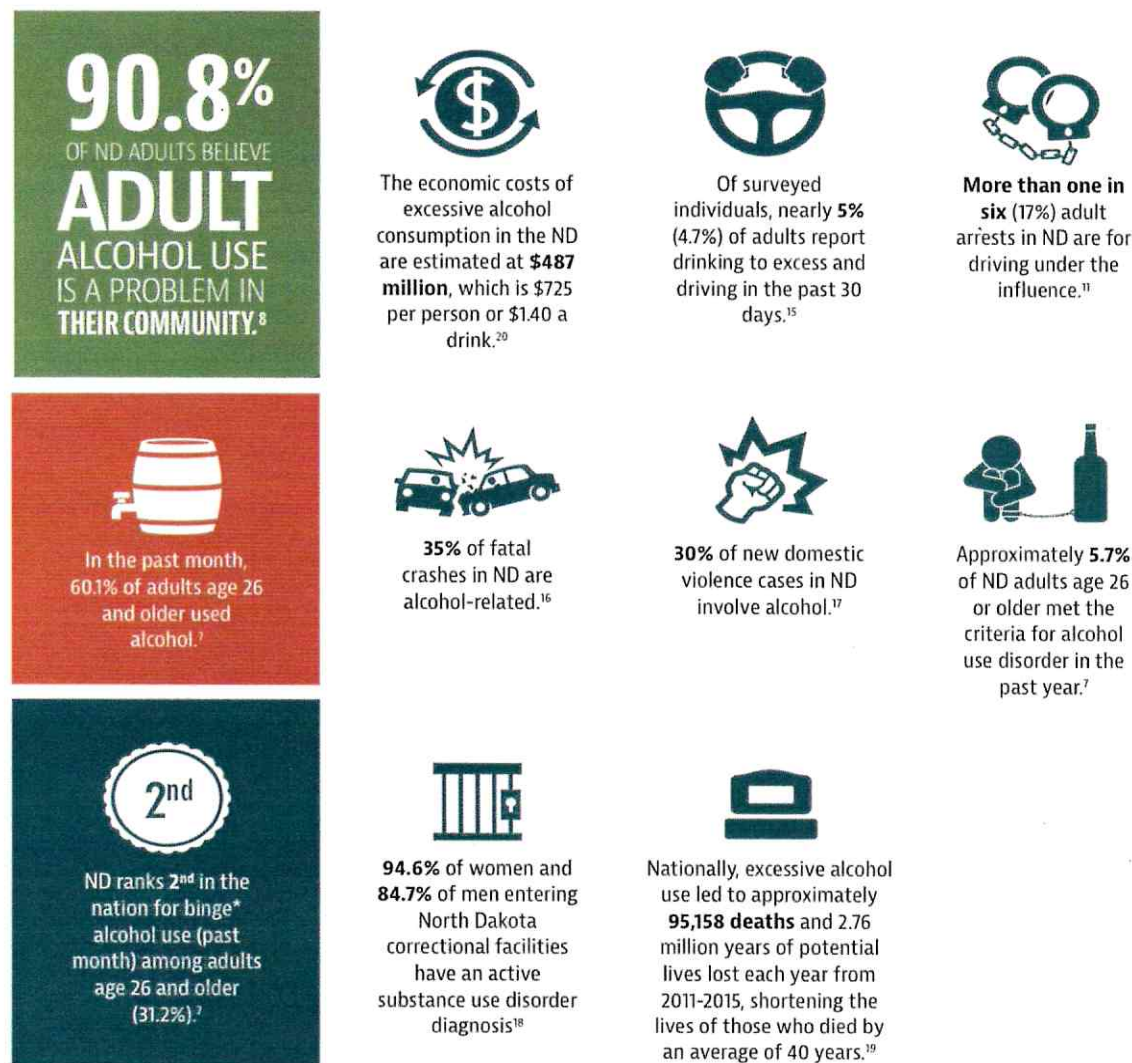
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1503

12.1-32-02. Sentencing alternatives - Credit for time in custody - Diagnostic testing.

9. A person who is convicted of a felony and sentenced to imprisonment for not more than three hundred sixty days is deemed to have been convicted of a misdemeanor. However, if an order is entered revoking a term of probation that was imposed as part of a sentence, the person is deemed to have been convicted of a felony.

ALCOHOL: ADULT

Adult binge drinking in North Dakota is a serious public health issue, resulting in many consequences impacting individuals, families and communities.



*Binge drinking: 5 or more drinks of alcohol on an occasion or in a row

2025 SENATE JUDICIARY

HB 1503

2025 SENATE STANDING COMMITTEE MINUTES

Judiciary Committee Peace Garden Room, State Capitol

HB 1503
3/24/2025

Relating to punishment for causing injury while operating a vehicle under the influence of alcohol; and to provide a penalty.

2:30 p.m. Chair Larson opened the hearing.

Members present:

Chair Larson, Vice Chairman Paulson, Senators: Castaneda, Cory, Luick, Myrdal, Braunberger.

Discussion Topics:

- Felony classification
- Impact impaired driving on victims
- Victims of DUI accidents

2:30 p.m. Representative Bolinske introduced the bill and submitted testimony in favor #43682.

2:33 p.m. Brianna Weeks testified in favor.

2:35 p.m. Tayler Christianson, Miss ND, testified in favor.

2:39 p.m. Chair Larson closed the hearing.

2:39 p.m. Senator Castaneda moved a Do Pass.

2:39 p.m. Senator Braunberger seconded the motion.

Senators	Vote
Senator Diane Larson	Y
Senator Bob Paulson	Y
Senator Ryan Braunberger	Y
Senator Jose L. Castaneda	Y
Senator Claire Cory	Y
Senator Larry Luick	Y
Senator Janne Myrdal	Y

Motion Passed 7-0-0

2:39 p.m. Senator Castaneda will carry the bill.

2:41 p.m. Committee discussion on upcoming schedule.

2:42 a.m. Chair Larson adjourned the meeting.

Senate Judiciary Committee

HB 1503

3/24/2025

Page 2

Kendra McCann, Committee Clerk

REPORT OF STANDING COMMITTEE
HB 1503 ([25.0671.02000](#))

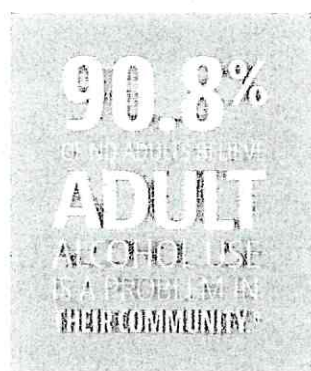
Judiciary Committee (Sen. Larson, Chairman) recommends **DO PASS** (7 YEAS, 0 NAYS, 0 ABSENT OR EXCUSED AND NOT VOTING). HB 1503 was placed on the Fourteenth order on the calendar. This bill does not affect workforce development.

12.1-32-02. Sentencing alternatives - Credit for time in custody - Diagnostic testing.

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Adult binge drinking in North Dakota is a serious public health issue, resulting in many consequences impacting individuals, families and communities.



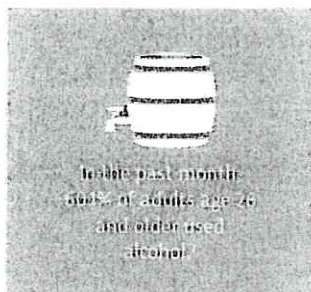
The economic costs of excessive alcohol consumption in the ND are estimated at **\$487 million**, which is \$725 per person or \$1.40 a drink.¹⁰



Of surveyed individuals, nearly **5% (4.7%)** of adults report drinking to excess and driving in the past 30 days.¹⁵



More than one in six (17%) adult arrests in ND are for driving under the influence.¹¹



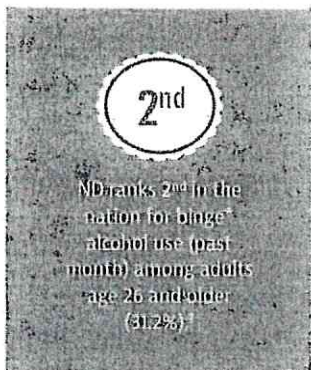
35% of fatal crashes in ND are alcohol-related.¹⁶



30% of new domestic violence cases in ND involve alcohol.¹⁷



Approximately **5.7%** of ND adults age 26 or older met the criteria for alcohol use disorder in the past year.⁷



94.6% of women and **84.7%** of men entering North Dakota correctional facilities have an active substance use disorder diagnosis.¹⁸



Nationally, excessive alcohol use led to approximately **95,158 deaths** and 2.76 million years of potential lives lost each year from 2011-2015, shortening the lives of those who died by an average of 40 years.¹⁹

*Binge drinking: 5 or more drinks of alcohol on an occasion or at a time