



MADD

Activism | Victim Services | Education®

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Testimony of Marianne Hudak

Before the Judiciary Committee

On Senate Bill 1348

“An Act Strengthening Drunk Driving Enforcement”

April 2, 2007

Thank you Co-Chairman Senator Andrew McDonald, Co-Chairman Michael Lawlor and members of the Judiciary Committee for holding this important hearing and for the opportunity to submit testimony to you today in support of Senate Bill 1348. I am Mariann Hudak, Victim Advocate for Mothers Against Drunk Driving in Connecticut.

The impact of drunk driving and underage drinking is felt throughout the state in the loss of innocent lives, the grief expressed by surviving family members and friends and the rise in high risk behaviors.

All too often the toll is listed as statistics. In 2001 my daughter Lori was killed by a drunk driver. The drunk driver was her friend. This girl came to our home on a Saturday night and asked Lori to go out with her. We didn't know at the time that her friend had been drinking prior to this. Lori left that night and never returned. The girl had a BAC of .16, and she was speeding when she lost control of the car and crashed into a utility pole. Lori's neck was broken, and I was told that she died instantly. This was five years ago, and I can still feel the emptiness in my heart. My life has truly been changed forever.

When MADD was founded in 1984 in CT, drunk driving was considered socially acceptable behavior despite the fact that 252 people were killed in alcohol-related crashes that year. Alcohol-related traffic fatalities have declined by 40% - progress that has been achieved primarily through the enactment and enforcement of tough drunk driving laws. However, the war against drunk driving has stalled – in 2005, 120 people were killed in alcohol-related crashes in CT – to MADD, even one more death is unacceptable.

It is time to strengthen, reform and intensify Connecticut's criminal and administrative DUI enforcement and sanctions. It is time to create an Open Container Law. Open Container laws have a significant deterrent effect against driving under the influence for both drinkers in general and for high risk drinkers. Open Container laws work to deter drunk driving from happening and thus reduce drunk driving death and injury on our roadways.

It is also time to court mandate the Ignition Interlock Device for offenders convicted the second time for DUI. Ignition Interlock Devices are part of the solution. They can prevent people who have alcohol in their system from driving a vehicle.

It is time to raise the court mandated Victim Impact Panel participation fee to \$100. I serve as a speaker on VIPs two times a month. I simply tell every offender that participates about my daughter Lori and her unacceptable and unnecessary death. I talk about consequences and behavior changes. I am always told by several attendees of the true benefit they receive from the VIP. This is a service that MADD provides to those who have been given a second chance. To raise the fee of this lifesaving panel is appropriate. The Connecticut General Assembly has the opportunity this session to eliminate serious inconsistencies in Connecticut's driving under the influence statute.

On behalf of Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD) Connecticut, I respectfully request the Judiciary Committee to support SB 1348 and JF this bill to the Senate floor.

Thank you.