

Dana Drysdale

I would like to thank you for the opportunity to be here today. On October 4th of 2007 I lost my sister, Thamara Correa, in a tragic automobile accident. My sister's school was canceled for the day and she was on her way to a friend's house. She was riding with her girlfriend in a car driven by the girl's brother. He was a 17 year old with a habit of speeding and dangerous driving. He displayed some of his stunts on his Internet site as well as on the streets of our town of Wolcott. He had previous tickets, accidents, and a reckless driving charge, but like so many other teenagers, thought he was invincible. We came face to face that day with just how fragile young lives can be. All three teens lost their lives in that accident with a great deal of fault landing squarely on the shoulders of that young driver.

For her own safety my sister was not supposed to be in his car, but on that day she chose to test the limits. She looked at it as just a quick ride to a friend's house. She was very respectful and not one to break rules, but I never thought that that one hasty decision would bring about me burying my 15-year-old baby sister.

She was a happy, energetic 15 year old with a smile that could melt your heart. She was loved by those around her and very trusting. She was held in very high regard by her classmates, teachers, and school administrators. But the ones that loved her the most were the babies. Her young nieces and nephews were truly privileged to have her in their lives. As many of us wake everyday with a broken heart after losing Thamara, these children are left with a great hole in their lives that was once filled with love and attention.

I feel that as adults we have a responsibility to protect our children and the impact our children have on our society. As a special education teacher and a mother I know that children make impulsive decisions on a daily basis that can have significant consequences. I believe that one of the roles of our legislators is to implement tougher guidelines on young drivers so they begin to clearly understand what can result as a consequence of their actions. I know that I will never get my sister back, nor fully understand why this had to happen to such a wonderful young woman. I also don't know how to explain to my 5-year-old son, nieces and nephews how a boy that had already broken so many rules was allowed to drive again.

I am not saying that a license should be taken away and never given back, but I believe driving is a privilege and needs to be treated that way. When a child is behind the wheel of a car, the potential for dangerous situations are very real. How ready are these children to handle and possibly be in charge of these situations? I believe we need to teach our children how to have responsibility with a car. I believe we need to look at other states such as NY and NJ, where they have stricter rules for first time drivers. Gradually giving a young driver privileges, will hopefully help them understand the responsibility they are taking on. When a 1 year old starts to walk, we do not just put them down and walk away. We stand with them, and walk with them to protect them and watch for dangerous situations so they learn to be safe and manage on their own.

I believe that if the boy driving the car my sister was in followed the stricter rules set by this bill, he would not have had a license on that day or any time soon. I know some parents have a hard

time saying no or setting limits, so it is up to the lawmakers to step in and foresee dangerous situations, isn't it?

I ask on behalf of myself, our family, our friends, my son, and nieces and nephews who will never see Thamara again do not make her death just another statistic, **MAKE A CHANGE!!!**