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(My son Dustin was killed by a drunk driver)
Testimony before the Joint Judiciary Committee
in Support of Ignition Interlocks for All Convicted Drunk Drivers
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A drunk driver killed our son Dustin on July 10th, 2004. He was only 18 years old. Imagine, for just a minute, a policeman coming to your door and telling you that your son is dead. Now, don't think about it anymore, because it becomes too painful, even if it's not real. When it is real, you can't imagine the pain.

You see, not only is your son dead, but so are his children, and their children, an entire branch of a family is gone, snapped dead. There will be no graduation ceremonies, or engagements or weddings. There will be no baseball or bedtime stories with the grand children. The surprise and laughter of Christmas morning will never happen. It's all gone because someone got drunk and drove.

There is nothing you can do about that. There is no bill you can pass or law that you can make that can bring Dustin back to life. But there is something you can do to save others. The most recent statistics I could find for Connecticut were from 2009. That year, only 99 people were killed by drunk drivers. That's pretty good, unless, of course, one of the 99 was your son or daughter or husband or wife. What's alarming is that 60 of those people would be alive today if Connecticut had required repeat offenders to have ignition interlock systems in their cars.

Changing behavior is the key to saving lives. Suspending driver's licenses for longer periods of time doesn't change behavior. People still have to drive to work. People still have to drive to the grocery store. This is a society in which driving is almost a necessity. It's been proven time after time that people continue to drive whether they have a license or not. But if they can't start their car, they can't drive. That's the whole point of an ignition interlock system. If you've had too much to drink, the system won't let you start your car. If you have somebody else blow into the device so you can start your car, the system requires you to take the test again periodically. If you don't, or you don't pass, the lights on your car flash and the horn blares. Law enforcement officers recognize the signs.

The beauty of ignition interlock is that it is paid for by the offender and installed and monitored by an authorized company. The State isn't burdened with the process, meaning there is little expense. The offender is able to continue his life, yet his ability to end someone else's is reduced dramatically. With each turn of the key that doesn't start the car, the offender's behavior is potentially being modified and safety on the roads is certainly improved.

The woman who drank and drove and killed our son Dustin is currently in prison. When she's released, she won't have to use an ignition interlock system even though her history of drinking is clear and she's taken a life. I just hope that when she gets in her car and turns the key, she doesn't kill your son or daughter or your husband or wife. Better than any other solution, ignition interlock can make sure it doesn't happen.