

14 February 2011

Honourable Chairman and Committee members:

On 18 April 2008 our lives were changed forever. We were further shocked to learn that the man who caused the accident that took Josh had no business being on the road that day and that for his actions he would receive just a few months in jail. To add to our frustrations, he continued to drive with a suspended license even after the accident. The fact that he had caused a fatality did nothing to his conscious or change his behaviour.

You can imagine the frustration that we felt having to pass by this man's house and car daily on our way to the family home or seeing him drive around town, knowing that not only was he not supposed to be on the road, but that he may just cause another accident and take someone else's son, daughter, spouse, friend or neighbour.

It is a common misconception that once a person has caused a fatality with a motor vehicle that they are automatically charged with negligent homicide with a motor vehicle or a similar charge. I know that was certainly my thought. I thought that we would have to do little to ensure that this man who changed our lives forever would receive an appropriate charge and sentence. I was sorely mistaken.

We shared our concerns with police, state's prosecutors and legislators. Each sympathized with us. They too shared our belief that drivers who continue to ignore the law and their punishment of a suspended license, who continue to break the law, even leading to further greater offenses must receive a punishment equal. Perhaps, just perhaps, if those who previously cared not at all for the law knew that they would serve a mandatory sentence if they continued to ignore their punishment, they would think twice before getting behind a wheel.

The two bills 6142 and 6143 before you today are the culmination of our lives focus since 2008. It is our hope that if these two laws go into effect it may spare another family from enduring what we have. These bills would also enable police and prosecutors in their protection of all of us throughout Connecticut.

Thank you for your time and consideration,

Rebecca Stearns