

Testimony before the Ohio Senate Transportation, Commerce and Labor Committee
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Chairman LaRose, Vice-Chairman Manning, Ranking-Member Cafaro, ladies and gentlemen of the Senate Transportation, Commerce and Labor Committee, thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak on behalf of House Bill 154 to make changes to traffic laws to improve safety for bicyclists on Ohio roadways.

I am Kimber Perfect, Deputy Chief of Staff for Columbus Mayor Andrew J. Ginther, but I am before you today as a life-long bicyclist with a personal story to share that may be helpful to you as you consider this important legislation sponsored by Representatives Mike Henne and Mike Sheehy.

On Wednesday, July 27, 2016 I was in the middle of a fabulous week long vacation with three grandchildren at Lake Erie. My sister joined me for the week to spend some quality time with the children as well.

We had planned to take the children to Marblehead that morning and I decided I would ride my bike and meet my sister and grandchildren there. I was in training for an annual bike ride that has raised more than \$130 million in eight years for cancer research at the James Cancer Hospital and Research Center at The Ohio State University. I have ridden Pelotonia every year since 2011, always riding a minimum of 100 miles and in 2015 for the second time I rode the entire 180 miles over two days.

I have been an avid bicyclist my entire adult life and I typically bring my bike on visits to Lake Erie to enjoy the scenic byways promoted for bicyclists, including the road I was traveling on that morning.

I was traveling westbound on Sand Road between Catawba Island and Port Clinton when I spotted a car in my side view mirror approaching me from behind, and I also saw ahead an oncoming car traveling in the eastbound lane. I was cycling on the right side of my lane when suddenly there was an enormously loud crash as I was hit; I came up out of my bicycle seat and went flying several feet into the air. As I was traveling through the air, I saw the car that had just hit me continue to accelerate forward and I came crashing down on the pavement just missing the oncoming car traveling east bound by less than a foot. I was in immediate and excruciating pain and all alone on the road. I thought to myself, if I don't get myself off this road, I will surely be hit by yet another car. I dragged myself off the road with my hands and arms, the only part of my body, besides my brain that apparently was working.

The crash was so loud that people came running from several directions, including an ICU nurse who heard the crash from six houses away. A man and woman who lived nearby were on the phone almost immediately with 911 and meanwhile, the man who hit me slowly walked back to the crash site from where he had pulled his car over down the road. His side view mirror that had struck my backside lay on the ground beside me, clearly illustrating just how badly I had just been hit.

In addition to the excruciating pain in my back, my legs felt as if hundreds of sharp pins were being stuck into my skin. Because of my other injuries, I had not yet noticed much about the point of impact with the car, but I can tell you that today, I still have a huge

knot where the car struck me on my backside, and that knot continues to throb on a regular basis, a constant reminder of one of the worst days of my life.

The man who hit me admitted to both me and to the deputy sheriff who had arrived on the scene that he saw me as his car approached me on my bicycle, but he said he also saw the oncoming car and he 'decided there was room for all,' his exact words, so he plowed right through.

I was wearing a helmet, of course, but it was my back that took the brunt of the fall as I came crashing down on the pavement. Emergency Medical Services arrived, and it took quite a long time to get a neck brace on me and to lift me onto a board. As I recall, there were at least six people who assisted the two EMS workers who then transported me to Magruder Hospital in Port Clinton. After a CT scan, which was read by both the medical professionals at Magruder and doctors from Ohio State's Wexner Medical Center, I was flown via an emergency Med Flight helicopter to Columbus.

An emergency medical team at Wexner Medical Center moved into immediate action to assess and address my injuries. I was a Trauma One patient who had been rendered a paraplegic at this point. My back had been broken at my T-12 and the splinters from my mangled back had pushed into my spinal cord, which was what was causing all the issues with my legs, including paralysis. Two neurological surgeons were assigned to perform emergency surgery. Amazingly, I was able to explain to them exactly what had happened at the accident just as I have done with you here this morning, which helped them as they prepared for the surgery the two surgeons would perform together.

My family members present at the hospital were prepared for the worst, which included being told that I could end up in a wheel chair with no ability to control my bladder and lose other functions based on the nature of my particular spinal cord injury. My son and his wife had to hear this news while they were on vacation in England; my daughter was able to get to the hospital from her vacation here in the U.S. in time for my surgery.

My two surgeons were able to take what would normally have been a five-hour surgery down to two- and-half hours, putting me back together again by inserting eight screws in my back. They had to remove pieces of my backbone because it was so badly battered and broken up. But by the end of that first day of being struck by the car, I was awake and able to wiggle my toes again. At the time, I was surrounded by loved ones and amazing medical professionals and I was a bit curious why everyone around me was so surprised at this amazing feat of wiggling my toes. Two days later, I was able to take a couple of steps. After five days, I was moved out of the intensive care unit to a regular hospital room and then to Dodd Hall for a solid week of in patient rehabilitation.

I wore a back brace for several weeks and had extremely limited mobility. Occupational therapy at Dodd Hall provided instructions to me on personal care, safety and mobility so I could live independently the first few months after the accident. I have worked extremely hard to bring myself back to normalcy. I continue in physical therapy today as an outpatient at Ohio State and I do my own physical therapy exercises at home for at least an hour every day. I want my old life back and am working hard every day to make that happen.

The healing process for my injuries will take about 18 months and I can tell you that my life has been forever changed as a result of getting hit by this car. And there are no

guarantees that I will fully recover from the spinal cord damage and it is possible that I will have life long issues as a result of my back injuries.

The man who hit me was charged with un-assured clear distance by the deputy sheriff at the scene of the accident. He pleaded guilty to this offense while I was still in the hospital and he paid a \$32 fine in Ottawa County.

I ask you to please consider passing HB 154 that will require Ohio motorists to pass bicyclists leaving at least three feet of clearance so accidents such as mine can possibly be avoided. I am certain this law will not only prevent injuries such as mine, but I know that it will also save lives.

Thank you. I am happy to answer any questions.