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Senator Jim Hughes
Ohio Statehouse
1 Capitol Square
Room 125
Columbus, Ohio 43215

Honorable Jim Hughes,

I am writing this letter to voice my support of SB 146, an enhanced penalty for distracted driving. On July 31, 2008, my brother Aaron Gilmore was killed in an automobile crash when the pickup truck he was riding in was struck from behind by a tractor-trailer at U.S. 23 and Tarlton Rd. The truck my brother was riding in had been slowing to a stop for a traffic signal that had turned red. His vehicle was severely damaged upon impact and caught fire. Bystanders were able to extricate the pickup's driver and rear seat passengers as the truck began to burn. Aaron had received multiple trauma and was trapped as the dash had been displaced onto his legs making any rescue attempts futile. My brother was consumed in the fire.

At the time of this crash, the driver of the semi truck was distracted by his cellphone. Cellphone records show that the driver of the semi had been on his cellphone for approximately 42 minutes prior to the crash. Witnesses reported to the Ohio State Highway Patrol that the semi had repeatedly crossed over the centerline as it traveled north on U.S. 23 prior to the crash. The driver of the semi stated to OSP that he never saw the truck my brother was riding in and did not know that traffic had stopped for a red light. The semi driver was travelling at 60 mph as he smashed into the back of my brother's vehicle, pushing it into the back of a mini van and ultimately pushing both vehicles into the back of a tractor-trailer that had stopped for the traffic signal.

I work as a firefighter and was employed as a part time

firefighter with one of the departments that responded to this crash. I had called off my shift 42 minutes before my brother's crash. Since my brother's death, I have dealt with guilt for calling off duty that day. I am also the one who had the displeasure of informing my family and my mother of her son's death. For as long as I live, I will never forget her wail as I broke the news to her. This mental trauma caused a breakdown at my full time firefighting job six months after his death. I had to seek counseling to deal with what I was going through. Although I no longer go to counseling, I still have feelings of guilt for calling off duty and not being there to respond to my brother's wreck.

My brother had four children, three sons and a daughter. These children are now growing up without a father. My brother's youngest son is in my legal custody and is being raised by my wife and I. There isn't a day that goes by that I do not think of my brother and his wreck. I am constantly reminded of what was taken from my family because of the selfish act of another driver when I look at this child. It is not fair to these children to have to grow up without the guidance and love of their father because of the actions of a distracted driver.

The driver of the semi was charged with Vehicular Manslaughter. He received a \$500.00 fine and a six month revocation of his license. A second person died as a result of this crash. I feel that this penalty was a slap in the face to the two families who lost a loved one in this crash, as well as to those who were injured and required a lengthy hospitalization and recovery.

I would urge members of the Ohio Senate to support this bill. Distracted driving has reached epidemic proportions in our state and is only getting worse as technology advances for mobile devices.

Thank you for allowing me to voice my opinion.

Dan Gilmore
Firefighter/Paramedic