

Senate Bill 146
Senate Criminal Justice Committee
Dom Tiberi
Proponent Testimony
June 3, 2015

Chairman Eklund, Vice Chair Obhof, Ranking Member Thomas, and members of the Ohio Senate Criminal Justice Committee ... my name is Dom Tiberi. Thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak to you this morning in support of Senate Bill 146.

I am here to tell you that we have an epidemic not only in the State of Ohio but around the country and it is called distracted driving. I am here as a grieving father to tell you that my wife Terri and I miss our daughter Maria each and every day... just as all the other parents do that have lost a child. Parents are not supposed to bury their children.

It's been one year and eight months since our Maria walked out the door of our home for the last time. But I remember it like it was yesterday. It was after 10PM. Her mother called out, "I love you, Maria". She called back, "I love you more" ... and left.

She was driving from Dublin into Columbus to see her sister who was working that night. I had this weird, uneasy feeling and I didn't want her to go. But she was 21. I spent that evening in in what I call I my "worry chair", the one that faces all the pictures of my kids. I sat there ... and I waited. Finally, at about 2:25 in the morning, I heard a car door slam and a dog bark and I thought, "Thank God, she's home". Then the doorbell rang, five times, fast. I thought, "What in the world is she doing? She knows her mother has to get up early". I thought she had forgotten her keys ... again. What I saw when I opened my door will be frozen in my mind forever. Standing on my porch were seven police officers, and one of them was a police chaplain. I will never forget the words they told me.. Maria was involved in a horrible crash and she did not survive."

We know Maria was not drinking. Evidence shows she was not on the phone or texting. And yet, just six minutes after leaving our home, she somehow became distracted and, driving 53 miles an hour, she ran into the back of a stopped semi. We may never know exactly what happened that night. But we do know this. We don't want Maria or any other kid to be just a statistic. We don't want her death to be in vain. It is now our mission to raise awareness about distracted driving and prevent as many accidents as we can.

The statistics are scary... In Ohio Auto accidents are the number one killer of the age group 8 to 24.... In Ohio every 7.8 hours someone one is killed in an auto accident.... Nationally it is every 16 minutes... In a partnership with my 10tv family we have created Maria's Message. To date we have taken the message to 50 area high schools and over 30 thousand kids have taken the pledge not to be distracted drivers. Those efforts will continue in the new school year. We have also provided kids with free defensive driving classes and that will continue this summer with

the first one slated for June 17th. We are also holding public events... encouraging parents to bring their kids to hear the message... Our next public event will be in July in Chillicothe.

My wife Terri and I have also started the Maria Tiberi Foundation. Our primary mission is buying driving simulators. To date we have purchased 13 simulators. 5 of them were donated to ODOT and are being made available to high school kids around the state. The other 8 simulators have been donated to area police departments and being used in high schools. Distracted driving is simple to define... It is anything that takes your hands off the wheel... Your eyes off the road... Your mind off your driving. And while texting and driving is a huge problem it is not the only problem. Putting make up on, eating while driving, reading the paper or an ipad, playing with the radio, drinking and driving, having a car full of kids... all of these are examples of distracted driving. I feel we need some kind of legislature that addresses distracted driving as a whole one that will hopefully help to put an end what is killing our kids.

We want to celebrate Maria's life by protecting the lives of others. We want Maria's Message to save lives. On behalf of my wife, Terri, our family and friends, Maria's friends, and drivers everywhere ... thank you for calling attention to this growing danger on our roads.

Chairman Eklund and members of the Senate Criminal Justice committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide proponent testimony on Senate Bill 146. I am happy to answer any questions that the committee may have.