**Carmela Wiant**

**Senate Local Government, Public Safety, and Veterans Affairs**

**9/26/17 – Proponent Testimony for S.B. 148**

Chairman Uecker, Vice Chair Wilson, Ranking Member Thomas, and members of the Senate Local Government, Public Safety, and Veterans Affairs Committee, my name is Carmela Wiant, and my son is David Christopher Money. On August 7, 2006, David was involved in an auto accident from hydroplaning in Columbus. The car flipped several times, and he was critically injured. David was taken to the hospital.

Responders on scene were unable to determine who to call and inform, and did not have quick access to my contact information. I learned that my son had been involved in a car accident from his employer, but knew nothing else—and wouldn’t know anything for over two hours. I frantically called every hospital in the area, until finally someone answered the phone. It was the hospital chaplain, and he told me that David had already passed. David was twenty three, and would have been twenty four three days later. I never got the chance to say goodbye.

Speaking to Sgt. Hickey, who responded to my son’s accident, I learned that officers at the time had no access to next-of-kin information. When they scanned a driver’s license on their computer, all that came up was the license holder. I took my story to my legislators in April 2007, urging them to establish a next-of-kin database with the BMV, so that no parent, spouse, or sibling would have to go through what I did. A year later, the Money-Burge Act (Senate Bill 249) passed, establishing the next-of-kin database. Since then, over 700,000 people have signed up for the ID program. But with 11 million people in Ohio, it’s clear we have more work to do.

That is what brings me here today. Senate Bill 148 is the next step to expanding this effort and ensuring that no one goes through the horror I experienced. Having worked with Senator Huffman’s office to draft the bill, SB 148 would add the chance to add emergency contact information during the vehicle registration process. By doing this, law enforcement could access next-of-kin information at the scene of an accident through vehicle identification as well as driver’s license, in case a person’s ID was not present or inaccessible.

Members of the committee, I stand before you today as a grieving mother, one whose pain is just as fresh as it was so many years ago. I don’t want anyone else in Ohio to feel the heartache I have felt of not knowing, of being late to the scene, of not getting to say goodbye. I started this effort more than ten years ago, and we’ve made great progress. However, there is more to be done. Senate Bill 148 is the next step in this process. I strongly urge its passage. Thank you.