**Ohio House Transportation and Public Safety Committee**

**April 30, 2019**

**HB 106 Proponent Testimony**

**Stacy Schlotterbeck and Stephanie McClelland**

Chairman Green, Vice Chair McClain, Ranking Member Sheehy and members of the Ohio House Transportation and Public Safety Committee; If anyone knows the devastating effects of teen inexperience behind the wheel, it is us.  We live with the consequences of that every single day as we face each day without our children, Hunter McClelland and Gavin Schlotterbeck.  They were both just 17 when a crash caused by Gavin’s inexperience resulted in the loss of both of their lives.

My name is Stacy Schlotterbeck and I'm here today to share with you the story of my son, Gavin. Gavin was smart, funny, adventurous and generous, and was rarely seen without a smile on his face.  He loved life, his family, his friends, and his girlfriend.   He volunteered at the Columbus Zoo for 5 summers, had a part-time job at Chipotle, played on his high school ice hockey team, and was excited to begin his senior year at Olentangy Liberty.  He loved animals, and they him, and was planning to become a veterinarian.   His future was bright and we couldn't wait to see the places he would go.

My name is Stephanie McClelland and I wanted to share a bit about my daughter Hunter with you. Hunter was a remarkable girl, she had such a strong moral compass and was incredibly family oriented. On weekends you would find her home with her family playing cards, board games, watching a movie or just hanging out. Her boyfriend Gavin was often there as well. She was just such a good kid always making good decisions. She loved the outdoors, loved being barefoot, and had to make everything an extreme sport for the added excitement and fun. She was a member of National Honor Society, volunteered at our church in the Childrens ministry and worked at Barre 3 in the childcare lounge. Hunter had such a sweet tooth and you would often find her in the kitchen baking her famous chocolate chip cookies. Now she was not perfect and tended to be quite messy. We used to call her Hurricane Hunter because she left a trail everywhere she went. I would give anything to be able to clean up after her again. Her father and I couldn’t have been more proud of her and were so excited to see where life would take her as she was going to be entering her Senior year of high school.

On July 17, 2017, a beautiful, sunny Monday, Gavin and Hunter were on their way to Alum Creek to spend the day together.  Gavin was driving, and for a reason we will never know, he went right off the berm.  He overcorrected and crossed over the centerline.  They were hit by an oncoming car, and both died instantly.  In that moment, our lives changed forever, as did the McClelland's lives, and the life of the other teen driver, who survived but was injured.    

The investigation found that he hadn't been doing any of the things that we assume teens are doing when they crash:  he was not texting or using his phone, he was not speeding, he was not chemically impaired.   The cause of the crash was determined to be driver inexperience.  He simply overcorrected. And that split second reaction affected the lives of too many to count.

We, like many others, would still have assumed that the majority of teens crashes were caused by texting, but as we have since learned, the statistics do not bear this out.  It is inexperience that causes the most teen crashes, just as in Gavin's case.

As parents, we rely on the driver education system to teach our kids to be safe drivers, but this system is not enough.  That is why we desperately need better protections for our teens, and by extension, for everyone else on the roads with them.  The fact is, the majority of their learning experience will take place with us, not with their driving instructor.

Some may think it will be an "inconvenience" to have to supervise their child's driving for an additional 6 months over the current requirement.  We get that, trust us.  We’re all busy, and as working parents with children involved in multiple activities, we too had anxiously looked forward to the day our teens could drive themselves to work and practices.  But we're here to tell you, that inconvenience is nothing compared to the pain of living without your child.  An extra 6 months of valuable supervised driving experience for your child is just a blip in time compared to spending the rest of your life wondering if such a protection might have saved your child's life, or someone else's life, or spared those affected by the resulting lifetime of physical or emotional pain.  

As a society, we constantly push out messages of "buckle up" and "don't text and drive" and "don't drink and drive" and our children heeded those messages.  We did everything we knew to do to prepare them. We trusted in the state’s system, but it wasn't enough.  Now, we will always wonder what more we could have done to protect our children.  That is why we are here - it is not easy for us, but it is important because we don’t want anyone else to live through this lifelong sentence of sorrow and grief.   It is within our power to increase these protections for all teen drivers, thereby making the roads safer for everyone.

Ultimately, we'll never know if these protections would have created a different outcome for Gavin and Hunter’s story.  But they could create a different outcome for someone you love. And shouldn’t it be our ultimate goal to do everything within our power to make the roads safer for everyone?

Thank you for your time. We are happy to answer any questions.

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