

The Ohio House Transportation and Public Safety Committee
Tuesday, May 19, 2020

Good morning, Chairman Green, Vice Chair McClain, Ranking Member Sheehy and members of the Committee:

In June 2018, the day before Father's Day, my husband, John Fullenkamp, an engineer and farmer in Shelby County, Ohio, was killed.

It was a bright, cloudless Saturday afternoon, and he was working in the fields. He needed to move the tractor and equipment to a field less than a mile down the road, a trip he had taken countless times before. He was in an open-cab tractor and obeying all of the laws when a Cadillac Escalade hit him from behind. The driver, a 54-year-old woman, was using her phone to shop online at JC Penny's while driving. John was ejected from the tractor as it rolled off of the road. He wasn't instantly killed. He had last words, felt pain, and knew the world he was leaving behind.

A few miles away, I was at home, unable to walk from a major foot surgery, with our four children--aged 3, 6, 9, and 8 months. Our lives have simply never been the same. I see our kids growing up without the father that they all adored, the husband that I loved with all of my heart, and the provider for our home. Every milestone that passes is and will be a reminder of our loss- the first day of school, birthdays, graduations, weddings, big moments and small moments.

The investigation that ensued after John was killed was telling. Using cell phone history, black box data, and crash scene reconstructions, it was determined that the driver had a full 16 seconds to look up from her phone to see John and avoid the crash. Sixteen seconds may not sound like a lot, but that window of time is what I find myself begging God to get back. Sixteen seconds of distraction at a high rate of speed results in also simply a lot of road to blindly cover.

Because this is still an open court case, I will be brief on the details. The criminal sentencing was held in June 2019. The driver was given a 90-day jail sentence and received work privileges after 33 days. Her attorneys were also successful in obtaining driving privileges from 8:30 a.m. to 8 p.m. Monday through Sunday that allows for special driving privileges for shopping, and other non-essential trips. In my grief, I have cycled through all of the emotions, including anger, which I know is not productive, yet it is so hard to know how unjust John's death--murder--has been manipulated.

To move past this, I made the commitment to John to start a crusade against distracted driving. My organization, In the Blink of a Fly, has 8000 community followers, including the hundreds of students that I have spoken to at school assemblies. My message to them is what I implore to you today--there are consequences for irresponsibility. Real lives can be taken. Children can lose fathers, wives husbands, mothers sons. I ask you today to support HB 468, which will protect lives and take a CLEAR stance against distracted driving in the State of Ohio.

Thank you for your time and dedication, and I welcome any questions from the committee.