

HB 926

Good afternoon Committee Chair, Vice Chair and Committee Members

My Name is Lenora Wilson, two years ago February 9<sup>th</sup>, my life was changed forever. My youngest daughter Josette Wilson was killed by a drunk driver just four days after her 25<sup>th</sup> birthday. It has completely devastated everyone who loved her. She was a shining light in all of our lives. She had a ready smile and infectious laugh. She only wanted to do well for herself and for others. This light was put out by someone who made a decision to drink and drive. He was sentenced to five years for the crime the maximum under current law and he is up for parole after serving two years, and all he had to say to us in the courtroom was accidents happen every day. I, however, was sentenced to life.

I was sentenced to a life without my baby, a life where I wake up every morning with an ache of emptiness in my soul. I have a life sentence of imagining what her children would have been. I have a life of tending her grave, putting out flowers and decorating for the holidays and her birthday. I have a life where every workday I have to talk myself into going to work. I work in the Emergency Room where I had to go that night to identify her. I no longer find joy in my job.

I know that every parent who loses a child feels the emotions I feel, my feelings don't set me apart from any other parent. However, the way my daughter was taken from me was senseless and to know a blatant negligence on another's part is to blame makes me mad. When I was twelve years old, I attended my first funeral, for my niece, who was never allowed to take to her first breath, my sister was nine months pregnant when she was hit head on by a drunk driver. I remember standing there looking at this perfect baby and promising to never do anything that stupid to put another family through what we were going through, and I haven't.

To consider my Josette's life was only worth five years is an insult. My theory is this, if you intend to go to the bar and drink, to go to a party and drink or just go out with friends and drink without a designated driver then you have already made the decision while sober to drive yourself home either under the influence or intoxicated. Therefore, this makes the crime premeditated, if you take an innocent life while doing so the taking of that should be considered premeditated also, because everyone knows the risk of drinking and driving.

Thank you for allowing me to speak today and I urge to support this legislation.