

Melissa L. Escudero

I would like to thank Senator Fuschillo and The Senate Standing Committee on Transportation for inviting me here today. My name is Melissa Escudero. I am one of the parents who's child was a victim on Wednesday afternoon October 3, 2012. My son and four other students boarded the school bus on their way home but never made it. I was phoned a little after 3:00 PM to come to the school immediately. For my safety, I was not told at the time, that my son was involved in an accident. However, my intuition said something was wrong as my son should've been half way home at that time. That afternoon, was when my world turned upside down. My husband and I left immediately to the school. The anxiety of the unknown was both emotionally and physically painful for me. The travel time seemed like eternity. The possibility of something tragic happening just took over me. You see, Christian is my only child. He was born premature and I almost lost him then. So for me, he is my miracle baby although he was 8 years old at the time of the accident. I was unable to reach the school by car since the traffic on the main road was at a halt due to the accident. Therefore, I had to get out my vehicle and run blocks to the scene. One lady even stopped me to say she heard someone may have died. I then saw my son's school bus smashed inside someone's home. My heart just stopped as I thought there was casualties. Seconds later, I was then approached by many officials informing me that my son was okay and that he was a hero.

According to police officials, parents, and school staff, they said my son had checked on the defendant's condition. My son noticed the defendant was bleeding on the side of his head and was non-responsive. All the children on the bus were crying and scared as they were trapped. My son, moved to the back of the bus and was able to lift the emergency lever and escort the children out of the mini school bus. It was then, parents came to rescue the children. This accident was called "A Miracle". This accident occurred during dismissal time. Any other day, parents wait for their children in front of that home that was struck. The owner of the home, had left earlier to run some errands. Though my son is physically okay, he experienced nightmares the first two nights after the accident. We even prayed for the defendant that night of the accident, thinking he had a heart attack or was on some sort of medication. It was the following day, that the media released that defendant was DWI.

As for myself, I have experienced constant chest pains and have visited the ER twice. Though my son continues to take the school bus, I continue to feel anxiety every time he boards the school bus. I am fortunate that I am speaking a different story. My feelings towards the defendant, is that he acted irresponsible and selfish. He took these innocent children's lives into his own hands. Though, the school bus company reported the defendant had a clean driver's license, I highly doubt this was the first time he drank behind a wheel. For this person to have passed out while driving; he had to consume an abundance of alcohol. There have been three other school bus accidents after this case. All accidents were due to DWI. Something needs to be done immediately in regards to these bus drivers getting drunk during their hours of driving students to and from school. We cannot continue to let this happen and wait for tragedy to happen to react with tougher laws.

I am currently advocating to installing ignition interlock devices on each school bus and I will not stop until this law is approved. This law would not only benefit the safety of the children but pedestrians and citizens as well. As for the defendant, I hope he seeks professional counseling with his alcohol addiction and that he never be able to work with children again nor regain a license to drive. I pray that the court sentence the defendant as they see fit with the above action mention. Let's us all act on this together and not wait for a tragedy to strike.

Thank you,
Melissa L. Escudero