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The Maryland House of Delegates
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

Wednesday, March 6, 2024
The House Judiciary Committee
HB 1335 – Reckless and Negligent Driving – Death of Another – Must-Appear Violation
Sherry and Christian's Law

Statement in SUPPORT of HB 1335

WHAT DOES THIS BILL DO?

Under current law, if someone is charged with reckless or negligent driving, and their driving contributed to the death of another, they do not have to appear in court. They can pay the fine, and never face the loved ones of the person whose death they caused. There is a great pain for the families of the victim.

WHAT PROBLEM ARE WE TRYING TO SOLVE?

If this bill had passed in 2023, only five reckless drivers and thirty negligent drivers would have been required to appear in court. These thirty-five drivers and the families involved in these accidents would not put a burden on the judicial system. Instead, there would be an opportunity for justice, reconciliation, and healing in these horribly tragic events.

This bill is named after two different victims of two different, devastating accidents. On July 5, 2019, Sherry Zdon and her husband Thomas were out for a late afternoon drive in Conowingo Maryland when they were struck head-on by an oncoming vehicle. Both Sherry and Thomas suffered severe injuries and unfortunately Sherry later died of those injuries. Her husband Thomas had to have this left arm and left leg amputated. To this day the person who caused Sherry Zdon's death has not appeared in court, as it is not required.

Travis "Christian" Butcher, the other person referenced in the bill title, was driving to work the day before Thanksgiving in 2016, when he was hit on Route 7 in Abingdon Maryland. He had the right of way, but the driver did not yield to him. After three days in Shock Trauma, Christian passed away from his wounds. He was only 19 years old, and despite a long rap sheet, the driver never had to appear before a judge for her actions.

Facing the person who caused such pain often plays a major role in the healing process and adds accountability. Please note that there is some discretion for a judge to waive the must-appear if the two parties meeting would be considered dangerous, such as gang involvement or in other extenuating circumstances.

For the families of Sherry Zdon and Christian Butcher and all the other families who have faced unimaginable loss, this "Must Appear" legislation is part of their healing process. I urge a favorable report on HB 1335. Thank you for your consideration.