

Testimony of Sheila Sparks
Drunk driving victim
Testimony in Support of SB870
February 27, 2020

Good afternoon. My name is Sheila Sparks and I would like to tell you how my life was directly affected by a repeat drunk driving offender. In September 2014, I was driving home from work late at night. I was hit head on by a drunk driver who was traveling in the wrong direction on 301 in Upper Marlboro, MD. I don't remember any of my accident or the 48 hours that followed it. I had to be cut out of my car and was unconscious through the whole process. I was airlifted to Prince George's Hospital Shock Trauma department. That's when my parents received the call. My mom was told that I was breathing, but I had a bad head injury, and she should get to the hospital right away. Within a few hours, dozens of family and friends were told by the shock trauma team that I had a brain bleed, and there was no way to tell how extensive the damages would be until I was able to wake up from the medically induced coma I was placed in. In the meantime, my sisters, my aunts, my uncles, my cousins, my parents, my friends and most importantly, my 13 year old daughter took turns 2 at a time sitting in the ICU with me. I was on a respirator with all of the tubes and machines that accompany it. My daughter took one step in my room, turned around, and was not able to handle another visit for the rest of my hospital stay.

I suffered a broken collarbone that was later fused together with a titanium plate that I will have the rest of my life. I broke my wrist in three places. Five Lumbar vertebrae in my back were fractured, three ligaments in my knee were torn, and I had multiple wounds that required stitches, including 30 staples to my head.

Once I was released from the hospital, I googled the drunk driver's name and looked him up on the public MD Judiciary case search. That's when I realized I wasn't the first person this man hit while driving drunk. Just nine months prior to my accident, to the exact day, the same drunk driver hit a Prince George's County Police officer while on duty in his patrol car. At his hearing, the drunk driver pled guilty to driving while under the influence of alcohol. But yet when he chose to drink and drive the night of my accident, he was driving on a valid license, in his personally registered vehicle, with no interlock device.

If this drunk driver would have immediately received an interlock device in his vehicle upon his incident of driving while impaired, he would not have been able to almost kill me. My daughter would not have that image engraved in her head of me in the hospital that night. My parents would have never gotten that call.

The state is absolutely obligated to protect the community from people that have been convicted of driving under the influence. We are not asking for an indefinite revocation of driving privileges. We are not asking for extensive jail time that would immediately affect the quality of life for family members of drunk drivers. We are asking that you choose to protect the people of Maryland, just like 30 other states have chosen to do, by demanding a previously convicted drunk driver, be forced to prove their sobriety before operating a vehicle.

You have before you an amazing opportunity to save the lives of the people of Maryland. I am hoping you choose to do what is best for all of us. Thank you.