

TESTIMONY OF RUSSELL HURD-

SENATE BILL 179- DISTRACTED DRIVING MONITORING SYSTEMS SUPPORT

MR CHAIRMAN AND MEMBERS OF THE JUDICIAL PROCEEDINGS COMMITTEE

MY NAME IS RUSSELL HURD AND I RESIDE IN HARFORD COUNTY, MARYLAND.

BEFORE I BEGIN MY REMARKS I WOULD LIKE TO ASK EACH OF YOU TO CLOSE YOUR EYES FOR JUST A FEW SECONDS AND PICTURE SOMEONE YOU LOVE WITH EVERY FIBER OF YOUR BEING, SOMEONE THAT YOU ADORE, SOMEONE THAT YOU COULDN'T BEAR TO LOSE. KEEP THAT PERSON IN YOUR THOUGHTS AS I SPEAK WITH YOU THIS MORNING.

ON MARCH 10 1981 I BECAME A FATHER FOR THE VERY FIRST TIME WHEN MY DAUGHTER HEATHER WAS BORN. SHE WAS BEAUTIFUL IN EVERY WAY AND A TRUE GIFT TO HER VERY YOUNG PARENTS.

SHE WALKED AND TALKED BEFORE HER TIME, SHE BECAME A STRAIGHT A STUDENT IN SCHOOL, SHE LEARNED TO PLAY THE FLUTE AND GUITAR. THERE SEEMED THAT THERE WAS NOTHING THAT OUR LITTLE GIRL COULD NOT DO.

FROM A VERY EARLY AGE OUR HEATHER FELL IN LOVE WITH THE MAGIC OF DISNEY. SHE LOVED THE MOVIES, THE MUSIC AND THE CHARACTERS, ESPECIALLY THE ORNERY ONES OR FOR SOME REASON THE VILLAINS. HER FAVORITE CHARACTER WAS STITCH FROM LILO AND STITCH AND THERE WAS NEVER A TIME WHEN SHE SAW HIM THAT SHE DIDN'T GIGGLE HER VERY SPECIAL GIGGLE THAT MEANT THE WORLD TO HER MOM AND I.

AT A VERY YOUNG AGE, AS ONE OF OUR FAMILY VACATIONS AT WDW WAS ENDING WE LOOKED DOWN TO NOTICE HEATHER WAS CRYING. WE ASKED WHY SHE WAS SAD AND SHE REPLIED THAT SHE HATED TO LEAVE BUT THAT ONE DAY SHE WOULD NEVER HAVE TO LEAVE BECAUSE SHE WOULD LIVE IN FLORIDA AND WORK AT THE MOST MAGICAL PLACE ON EARTH.

FAST FORWARD NOW A FEW YEARS. OUR HEATHER IS NOW A YOUNG WOMAN, AND HER DREAM WAS COMING TRUE. SHE WAS CHOSEN OUT OF HUNDREDS OF CANDIDATES FOR A INTERNSHIP AT WDW. SHE WAS MOVING TO FLORIDA. ALTHOUGH WE WERE SAD THAT SHE WAS MOVING AWAY WE WERE THRILLED THAT SHE WAS MAKING HER DREAMS COME TRUE.

LIKE EVERY LITTLE GIRL, HEATHER DREAMED OF HER WEDDING DAY. SHE DREAMED OF THE WHITE DRESS. SHE DREAMED OF BEING CINDERELLA. IN THE FALL OF 2007 HEATHER BECAME ENGAGED RIGHT AT OUR FAMILIES FAVORITE PLACE AT THE MAGIC KINGDOM. PLANS FOR HER DREAM WEDDING COULD NOW BEGIN.

JANUARY 3, 2008 DAWNED AS A DAY OF ANTICIPATION, OF EXCITEMENT, OF DREAMS ABOUT TO COME TRUE. THIS COLD JANUARY DAY WOULD BEGIN THE PLANS FOR OUR HEATHER'S MAGICAL DREAM WEDDING.

MY WIFE SON AND I TRAVELED TO FLORIDA TO MEET HEATHER AND HER FIANCE PATRICK AT DISNEYS WEDDING PLANNER. THIS MEETING WAS TO TAKE PLACE AT NOON THAT DAY.

I REMEMBER SITTIING OUTSIDE THE WEDDING PAVILION AS NOON CAME AND WENT. A NERVOUSNESS SET IN AS HEATHER WAS NEVER LATE TO ANYTHING. WE WAITED AND WAITED UNTIL THE WEDDING PLANNER TOLD US OF A CRASH INVOLVING OUR HEATHER.

WE HURRIED BACK TO OUR DISNEY RESORT AND DROVE THE BACK AND FORTH ON FLORIDA ROADS SEARCHING FOR INFORMATION ON OUR BEAUTIFUL DAUGHTER. FINALLY WE WERE TOLD TO DRIVE TO ORLANDO REGIONAL HOSPITAL TO IDENDIFY A VICTIM OF THE CRASH THAT RESEMBLED OUR DAUGHTERS DESCRIPTION. WE WERE TOLD THAT SHE WAS DECEASED. WE DROVE OFF IN SHOCK TOWARDS THE HOSPITAL ONLY TO RECEIVE ANOTHER CALL FROM THE HOSPITAL CHAPLAIN SAYING THAT THE VICTIM WAS IDENTIFIED AND IT WAS NOT OUR DAUGHTER. FOR A VERY BRIEF SECOND WE TOOK A DEEP BREATH UNTIL THE WORDS NO PARENT WANTS TO HEAR CAME THRU THE PHONE. "YOU DON'T UNDERSTAND" YOUR DAUGHTER DIED AT THE SCENE OF THE CRASH.

LATER WE WERE TOLD THAT THE REASON OUR DAUGHTER WAS GONE WAS THAT SHE WAS HIT ALONG WITH 8 OTHER VEHICLES STOPPED AT A TRAFFIC SIGNAL BY A TRACTOR TRAILER WHO NEVER APPLIED HIS BRAKES AND SLAMMED INTO THE CARS AT 65 MILES PER HOUR. THE REASON THIS PROFESSIONAL DRIVER DID NOT NOTICE THE 9 VEHICLES STOPPED AT THE TRAFFIC SIGNAL? HE WAS TEXTING HIS COMPANY AT THE TIME OF THE CRASH!!

WE WERE IN DISBELIEF!

BECAUSE OF SOMEONE TEXTING WHILE DRIVING I WILL NEVER WALK MY DAUGHTER DOWN THE AISLE OF HER WEDDING DAY.

BECAUSE OF SOMEONE DRIVING DISTRACTED I WILL NEVER DRIVE THAT SPECIAL FATHER DAUGHTER DANCE AT HER WEDDING.

BECAUSE OF SOMEONE DRIVING DISTRACTED WE WILL NEVER HEAR MY DAUGHTERS SPECIAL GIGGLE EVER AGAIN.

13 YEARS AGO WE MADE IT OUR FAMILIES MISSION TO SAVE LIVES ON OUR ROADWAYS AND TO END DISTRACTED DRIVING FOREVER. 13 YEARS HAVE PASSED SINCE WE FIRST TESTIFIED HERE IN ANNAPOLIS FOR A BILL INTRODUCED BY THEN DELEGATE JEFF WALDSTREICHER TO BAN TEXTING WHILE DRIVING. MORE THAN A DECADE HAS PASSED SINCE WE WERE FINALLY SUCCESSFUL IN PASSING MARYLANDS TEXTING AND HEANDHELD CELL PHONE BAN. THESE LAWS, THOUGH NOT PERFECT HAVE INDEED SAVED LIVES AND EVEN IF THAT NUMBER IS ONE, WE KNOW THAT IT HAS BEEN WELL WORTH THE EFFORT. TODAY WE ONCE AGAIN ARE HEAR TO SAVE A LIFE, TO SAVE ONE FAMILY THE ANGUISH MY FAMILY WILL FOREVER FEEL. TO KEEP FAMILIES INTACT. I STRONGLY URGE YOUR SUPPORT FOR SB 179