



Testimony of Marietta Squire
House Environment & Transportation Committee
In Support of HB 1139

Good Afternoon Chairman Marc Korman, Vice Chair Regina Boyce, and members of the House Environment & Transportation Committee.

My name is Marietta Squire and I live in Upper Marlboro, MD. I was the mother of Kayla Williams-Rawlinson, who died moments after the car she was riding in crashed into a concrete drainage wall in Accokeek, MD on November 25, 2023. Kayla lived in Upper Marlboro all of her life with the exception of four years living the undergraduate life on campus in Huntsville, Alabama, and two years living in Loma Linda, California while obtaining her graduate degree in Marriage and Family Therapy. Kayla was 32-years-old at the time of the crash.

Kayla loved life and was a happy person. Her smile was infectious. When Kayla laughed, we laughed. Her favorite holiday was Christmas because she loved using that day to celebrate the birth of Christ. Kayla's second favorite day was her birthday. She would celebrate the entire week, and her Happy Birthday banner still hangs in her living room where it will stay for a very long time. Kayla made such an impact on those in her orbit that her graduate school is establishing a memorial for Kayla in the Behavioral Health building where a bench has been purchased and will be placed. The bench will provide a peaceful place for current and future students to study and also read testimonies from various classmates and faculty about Kayla's impact on the school, students, and her clients. The testimonies will be an inspiration to anyone feeling the rigors of academia and pressures to give up.

On the night of the crash, Kayla and her boyfriend were riding in a car driven by a reckless driver who was in town visiting his family in Maryland during the Thanksgiving holiday. The driver, DeAndre Gross, grew up in Maryland and it is where he spent most of his life. Kayla's boyfriend introduced her to the driver the night of the crash. The driver said to Kayla and her boyfriend "leave your car parked, I'll do the driving." The

driver failed to mention his many driving offenses: a DUI, multiple charges for driving on a suspended license, reckless driving, driving on a suspended registration, driving without tags, driving an uninsured vehicle, and most egregiously, he was driving without a license the night of the crash because his license had been revoked.

That fateful night ended with the driver speeding 80 miles per hour in a 30 miles per hour school zone, hitting the concrete wall moments later. Kayla's last words were "you are leaving the road."

According to the only other surviving witness, the driver was stopped by a state trooper for speeding on the same fateful night prior to the crash but was only given a verbal warning. After the state trooper's warning, Kayla and the surviving witness warned Gross to slow down as he continued speeding down the road. But Gross was hell bent, did not complete a curve in the road, and veered directly into the concrete at 80 miles per hour while running down a stop sign in his path. The driver's family members lived down the street from the crash site, so he knew the road well but still failed to drive carefully at the deadly turn.

Kayla is dead because justice failed her. But we don't have to let the failures continue. The driver's multiple offenses scream "help". I am here today as a mother speaking on behalf of Families for Safe Streets. Families for Safe Streets represents many parents, siblings, parents and other relatives of loved ones injured or tragically lost due to vehicular violence. We have an answer to the cries for help from perpetrators and survivors: Intelligent Speed Assistance (ISA). Maryland laws as they currently stand will not help incorrigible recklessness, but this device will. It's common sense.

In conclusion, common sense is free; inaction on House bill 1139 will be costly. Intelligent Speed Assistance is tremendously important, and I'm hopeful Kayla's story will inspire legislators to pass this common sense safety measure. Thank you for allowing me to speak today.

info@familiesforsafestreets.org | familiesforsafestreets.org | 844-377-7337

Families for Safe Streets (FSS) confronts the preventable epidemic of traffic violence by advocating for life-saving changes and providing support to those who have been impacted by crashes. All of our members have lost a loved one or suffered a life-altering injury.



Kayla Jeanette Williams-Rawlinson

March 29, 1991 - November 25, 2023