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Statement on Bentley's Law Requiring Child Support to Surviving Children of Parents Killed by a Drunk Driver

Bentley's Law

Bentley's Law <

<https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/nation/2022/04/21/drunk-drivers-who-kill-parents-pay-child-support-tennessee/7402587001/>> is an initiative led by Missouri resident Cecilia Williams and named for her grandson, Bentley, whose parents Lacey Newton and Cordell Shawn Michael Williams and their 4-month-old son, Cordell Shawn Michael Williams II, were killed in a fiery crash on April 13, 2021. First introduced in Missouri, the legislation requires drunk drivers who are convicted of killing of a parent to pay child support to surviving minor children.

Through Cecilia Williams' tireless advocacy efforts, versions of Bentley's Law are now being considered in more than a dozen states. The Tennessee Legislature passed "**Ethan's, Hailey's, and Bentley's Law**" <

[https://wapp.capitol.tn.gov/apps/BillInfo/default.aspx?](https://wapp.capitol.tn.gov/apps/BillInfo/default.aspx?BillNumber=HB1834&GA=112)

[BillNumber=HB1834&GA=112](https://wapp.capitol.tn.gov/apps/BillInfo/default.aspx?BillNumber=HB1834&GA=112)> on April 20, 2022, which includes the names of the two surviving children of Tennessee Police Officer Nicholas Galinger, who was killed by a hit-and-run drunk driver.

Cecilia Williams Statement

"Bentley's Law was created out of a tragedy that has affected the lives of two beautiful boys, Bentley and Mason, and the lives of our family. These crashes are

totally preventable, and I will continue to fight for change for all who have suffered from impaired drivers. Many families like mine suffer such a loss every second of every day, and Bentley's Law will bring change to hold the offender accountable for such horrific actions."

– Cecilia Williams

MADD Statement

"MADD supports Bentley's Law and similar bills that hold drunk driving offenders accountable. Too often, offenders are able to move on with their lives even after killing someone, while victims and survivors are reminded every day of their loss. The idea behind Bentley's Law is to both provide a sense of justice to victims and survivors and make sure offenders are reminded of the heartbreak they caused by making the choice to drive impaired."

Take Action

Visit [madd.org/BentleysLaw](https://secure.madd.org/page/39830/action/1?locale=en-US) <

<https://secure.madd.org/page/39830/action/1?locale=en-US>> to ask your elected officials to support Bentley's Law in your state.

Key Facts

Bill's creator: Cecilia Williams, whose son, daughter-in-law and grandson were killed in a horrific, fiery crash.

Crash: April 13, 2021, Jefferson County, Mo.

Victims: Cordell Shawn Michael Williams, 30, Lacey Newton, 25, Cordell Shawn Michael Williams II, 4 months

Driver: David Thurby, 26, was charged with three counts of DWI resulting in the death of a person in connection with the Jefferson County crash. He was convicted of three counts of second-degree involuntary manslaughter on Jan. 11, 2023.

Legislation: Bentley's Law was introduced in Missouri first.

- More than a dozen other states have introduced "Bentley's Law" or are drafting this legislation.
- Tennessee is the first state to pass "Bentley's Law." It passed the Tennessee House and Senate on **April 20, 2022** < <https://wapp.capitol.tn.gov/apps/BillInfo/default.aspx?BillNumber=HB1834&GA=112>> , and was renamed "**Ethan, Hailey's and**

Bentley's Law" <

<https://www.capitol.tn.gov/Bills/112/Amend/SA0923.pdf>> to add the names of Tennessee Officer Nicholas Galinger's children. It was signed into law on May 25, 2022.

- **"Melanie's Law <**

<https://apps.legislature.ky.gov/record/23rs/sb268.html>> " was signed in Kentucky on April 4, 2023. This is similar to Bentley's Law but expands the restitution requirement to include children whose parents or guardians were severely and permanently injured in an impaired driving crash.

- **Texas bill HB 393 <** <https://capitol.texas.gov/BillLookup/History.aspx?LegSess=88R&Bill=HB393>>

was signed into law on June 2, 2023.

- **Maine bill LD 1512 <**

<https://legislature.maine.gov/LawMakerWeb/summary.asp?paper=HP0967&SessionID=15>> was signed into law on June 23, 2023.

- **"Cody's Law <** <https://legis.la.gov/legis/BillInfo.aspx?&i=243934>> ,

similar to Bentley's Law, was vetoed by Louisiana Gov. John Bel Edwards on June 28, 2023.

- **Utah bill HB218 <** <https://le.utah.gov/~2024/bills/static/HB0218.html>>

was signed into law March 18, 2024.

- **South Dakota bill HB1195 <** <https://sdlegislature.gov/Session/Bill/24422>>

was signed into law March 18, 2024.

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Support Bentley's Law

Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD) needs your help to support Bentley's Law to require impaired drivers to pay restitution in the form of child support when an impaired driver causes a crash that kills a parent or parents. Bentley's Law is pending multiple state legislatures.

Support Bentley's law to advance victir

What is Bentley's Law? The measure is modeled after a proposal in Missouri, which makes impaired drivers pay restitution in the form of child support to a surviving spouse or other relatives who are raising the children of victims until the children turn 18. Bentley's Law better ensures justice and accountability. MADD believes that passing Bentley's Law will make people think twice before getting behind the wheel impaired. If a person makes the choice to drive impaired and kills a parent, the person will encounter another consequence for their deadly decision. To the victim of the impaired drivers, Bentley's Law allows for another avenue of restitution to help ensure justice. Seven states enacted measures like Bentley's Law (Tennessee, Kentucky, Texas, Maine, South Dakota, Utah and Montana).

On this page, please email your state lawmakers in support of Bentley's Law.

First Name*

Last Name*

Address 1*

City*

State*

Zip Code*

Email Address*

Mobile Number

Be a part of our community

Yes, I would like be apart of MADD and receive email updates.

Send your email to your lawmakers
HERE

As a constituent, I urge you to support Bentley's Law to require impaired drivers make restitution payments in the form of pay child support when an impaired driver causes a crash that kills a parent or parents. This legislation should not replace any civil liability related to impaired driving crashes, but should serve as an additional consequence for someone who makes the choice to drive impaired. Six states have Bentley's Law in place.

The problem of impaired driving is not going away. Drunk driving is still a deadly crime. According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) in 2023, 12,429 people were killed in drunk driving crashes in the United States—a 22% increase from 2019.

Bentley's Law better ensures justice and accountability. MADD believes that passing Bentley's Law will make people think twice before getting behind the wheel impaired. If a person makes the choice to drive impaired and kills a parent, the person will encounter another consequence for their deadly decision. To the victim of the impaired drivers, Bentley's Law