

Testimony of

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Hearing before the

House Committee on Energy and Commerce

Consumer Protection and Commerce Subcommittee

On

**“Summer Driving Dangers: Exploring Ways to Protect
Drivers and Their Families”**

Thursday, May 23, 2019

Almost 11 years ago, it was a typical day of getting everyone up and ready to head out the door as well as get myself to work on time. Like so many parents, I was multi-tasking, getting my child ready, making sure we had everything packed and rushing around with the typical morning busyness.

My world changed forever that day.

When I went to my office that day, I was focused on fixing all of the problems at work because that was my job. The day flew by. I went to lunch with my boss to update him on the status of my work projects. Then, having no idea what time it was, a colleague came into my office and said, "Hey, do you have a doll in your car?"

Stunned, I had no idea why he would ask such a question and couldn't imagine what he was talking about. I stood up and started to go through what I had done that day; and then realized, "OH MY GOD - NO- OH MY GOD!" I rushed to the car and as I came upon the side window – I saw Chase... I had not dropped him off at daycare as I had intended to.

I ripped open the car door, pulled him from the car seat and ran into the office with him in my arms. SCREAMING and crying and calling out for help. It was too late.

I was so distraught, upset and completely incapacitated that I spent hours in the ER. The nurse offered me painkillers to help me feel better; but I refused and said, "I did not deserve to not feel pain."

The police demanded that I be brought to the station and interviewed. The detective started asking all sorts of questions like, "Did you have life insurance on your son?" It started to hit me, I had killed my son. I did it. My poor sweet little boy. God take me now and return him to his beautiful mother. PLEASE GOD NOT HIM. TAKE ME.

I had to be hospitalized for several weeks and even registered under a fake name because I would have been arrested the moment I left the hospital. Tragically, I was not even allowed to attend my son's funeral.

My story continues with a very public trial, fighting a charge of involuntary manslaughter of which, thank God, I was found not guilty after three days in the courtroom. It really did not matter to me whether I was found guilty or innocent. I considered myself guilty. Guilty and full of shame and anger.

I cry every day for Chase. I still have not forgiven myself and don't know if I have the capacity to do so. I look at my wife in amazement. She never wavered. She stayed with me and we are still together. She is the most beautiful and wonderful wife in the world.

After the trial, Gene Weingarten, from the Washington Post, wrote a Pulitzer Prize winning feature article titled "Fatal Distraction" about parents who have gone through what my family went through. He somehow was able to capture the essence of how otherwise wonderful parents could be involved in a 'parent's worst nightmare.' He was able to explain this modern day phenomena in a way the people could understand and relate to.

This did not have to happen. Knowing that a simple chime could have saved my son's life is heartbreaking. How can this be, that in our great country it is not mandatory that the simplest alarm not be required in all cars? Children are dying and families are being destroyed unnecessarily. This has got to stop.

In our son's honor, we have made it our mission to try to prevent this unspeakable tragedy from happening to ANY parents. Every time we hear of another child dying, we ask WHY? Why does this keep happening when there is technology available to prevent it? Every loving, caring parent must realize that this disaster could happen to them. They need to be made aware of this phenomena. I urge Congress to take immediate action to save lives by requiring proven technology that would alert to an unattended occupant of a vehicle.

Thank you.