

Statement of Craig and Kathy Clark

May 18, 2016

Good Morning. On April 22nd of last year, our whole world was torn apart when our daughter Emily was killed in a crash by a truck driver with a history of falling asleep at the wheel. The truck driver was traveling almost 70 miles an hour when he ran over the top of Emily's car and the car in front of her. He did not brake nor did he attempt to avoid their cars which were stopped in traffic due to an earlier crash.

Seven nursing students from Georgia Southern University were in those cars going to the last day of their clinical rotation for that semester. Our sweet Emily lost her life along with Abbie Deloach, Caitlyn Bagget, McKay Pittman and Morgan bass, two other girls were seriously injured. These young ladies were committed to making the world a better place, and our communities must endure the loss of these young dynamic women. The lives of seven families are forever changed because of this horrific wreck.

This crash was no accident. The driver has a history of falling asleep behind the wheel and crashing his rig. The trucking company delayed the start of his shift for over 9 hours due to maintenance issues with his rig. Consequently, his 14 hour work shift began after a 9 hour delay. Twenty-two hours after his scheduled shift was supposed to begin, he ploughed through stopped traffic, clearly visible on the roadway.

This crash should not have happened. And yet, crashes like the one that killed our daughter will continue to happen if Congress passes the changes to the hours of service rule.

The erosion of truck driver safety laws has impacted our lives, and what happened to us can happen to anyone. The public deserves to be driving next to truck drivers who are alert and properly rested. When truck drivers are fatigued, the lives of everyone on the roads are put at risk.

Today we are calling upon Congress to consider the safety of the traveling public as they debate these safety rollbacks. We must act to improve safety, not degrade it. Fatigue kills. Requiring truck drivers to work hours that perpetuate fatigue will lead to more horrific crashes like the one that killed Emily. We hope that our message is heard loud and clear by the lawmakers who represent us so that no other family has to experience this type of loss.