



**Remarks by Amy Cohen  
Co-Founder  
Press Conference with Advocates for Auto & Highway Safety  
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2,842 days. Nearly 41 million minutes. That is how long it has been since I last kissed my kind, adorable 12-year-old son goodbye and then never saw him alive again. He was in 8th grade and just needed to walk from school to soccer practice. That should not be a deadly act. It is incomprehensible to describe what it is like to bury your child and then have to figure out how to live without him.

I spend a lot of time remembering. So many memories. Sammy was so boisterous and verbally outspoken, but he did not start out that way. When he was little, his sister always knew what he wanted. So much so that he hardly said more than a few words until he was three. Then one day when we were visiting the Bronx Zoo for the holiday light show, he stood in wonder at the elephant cage while the zookeepers fed them and said, “the elephant ate the whole apple.” That sentence really was Sammy’s first word, and since then he did not stop asking questions and marveling at life’s many wonders.



And he was determined. Only a few weeks before his death, he rode his bicycle 100 miles in a Century ride. My husband called and the 75 mile-marker. Sammy was sprawled on the ground and my husband said they would be home soon. Sammy was too tired to continue. But not Sammy. He forced himself to get up and mustered the strength to continue. He was the youngest one to complete the entire 100-mile ride.

I believed and hoped with all of my heart that he would draw upon that strength to pull him through when they were operating on him after the crash. But he was too small to withstand having his chest run over by a multi-ton commercial van.

His curiosity and passion would have done so much to fix the problems we face. Since he is not here, I fight for him. I joined with others and co-founded Families for Safe Streets. Every one of us in FSS has lost a family member or suffered a life-altering injury. We confront the complacency and fight for safe streets so that others do not suffer as we have.

In his memory, I urge Congress to prioritize safety. How is it possible that the vast majority of nations like ours have dramatically reduced the number of people killed on their roadways and

are dramatically safer than ours. We rank at the bottom of high income nations in terms of traffic safety -- 41st of 49 with only 8 countries having fewer deaths per capita.

It is imperative that vehicles be designed to protect children like mine just trying to get around on our streets. All vehicles should have automatic emergency braking with an ability to detect those walking and biking who are most vulnerable. Large class 3 – 6 trucks, similar to the van that killed my son, are frequently used to navigate city streets and neighborhoods. And there are only more of them on our roadways as online shopping has skyrocketed during the pandemic.



Moreover, we need to start by making a national commitment to reducing traffic deaths on our roadways to zero. Thank you Congresswoman Schakowsky for your soon-to-be released resolution making a commitment to Zero Traffic Deaths. Only by making that commitment will safety be prioritized to prevent these ridiculous changes -- like carving out trucks or letting youngsters who are 18-years-old drive 18-wheelers or eliminating the hour restrictions that make sure truck drivers aren't sleepy when operating big rigs. With a zero traffic deaths commitment, these ridiculous policy proposals would never even have been considered.

Thank you.

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*Families for Safe Streets (FSS) confronts the epidemic of traffic violence by advocating for life-saving changes and providing support to those who have been impacted by crashes. Comprised of individuals who have been injured or lost loved ones, FSS was founded in 2014 in New York City and is growing as a national movement with chapters across the country.*