



**Testimony from Jessica Hart on behalf of the DC chapter of Families for Safe Streets
for the Committee on Transportation & the Environment
budget oversight hearing for the Department of Motor Vehicles
held on Wednesday, April 24, 2024**

To the Committee on Transportation & the Environment:

My name is Jessica Hart and I am testifying on behalf of the DC chapter of Families for Safe Streets. Other members have submitted their written testimony for the record. We are an organization of individuals who have either lost a loved one to a traffic crash, or who have been seriously injured. We are grateful for the opportunity to testify today and acknowledge the difficult choices that are being made for the FY25 budget. We are here to urge the funding and rapid implementation of the [Strengthening Traffic Enforcement, Education, and Responsibility Amendment Act of 2024 \(STEER Act\)](#). We thank the Council for taking action to address dangerous and reckless driving by unanimously passing the STEER Act earlier this year.

My 5-year-old daughter Allison Hart – Allie – was killed on September 13, 2021, as she was riding her bike in a crosswalk in a school zone. The driver did not see her, failed to make a complete stop, struck her helmeted head with his passenger van, and continued through the intersection. And while the technology that is introduced in the STEER Act would not have prevented Allie's death, other technology could have. What I want everyone here today to hear is this: the technology and enforcement mechanisms in the STEER Act could save someone else's child, or spouse, or parent. It could save **you**. And in a city where traffic fatalities are up nearly 93% in the past five years, using every tool we can to save lives **matters**.

The District reached a grim milestone last year with 52 people who were killed while traveling on DC streets—a 16-year high. This testimony is submitted in honor of the 68 people who died in the past year. I would like to say the names of the seven people who died on DC streets since Mayor Bowser returned this bill **unsigned** on February 29: Steven Faison Jr., Edwin Morales-Martinez, Ronald Jordan, Jr., Michael Goldstone, John Candela, Mohamed Samura, and one unnamed person. **Is Mayor Bowser willing to look at these victims' families and tell them that she won't fund the legislation that could have saved their loved ones' lives?** Councilmembers: can you live with the ramifications of that decision?

The District has the opportunity to follow through on the [Safe Systems Approach](#) to eliminate fatal and serious crashes for all road users. While other areas of the FY25 Budget fail to create safe roads—as seen by the removal of bicycle lanes from the Connecticut Ave Multimodal

Safety Improvement Project in favor of parking—the STEER Act follows through on the Approach’s areas to create safer people, safer vehicles, and safer speeds.

We support funding all components of the STEER Act, but we also recognize that not all are going to have an equal impact on this crisis. **We therefore urge the Council to fund the Act’s Intelligent Speed Assistance (ISA) provision in the FY25 budget.** The STEER Act requires ISA be installed in the vehicles of the *most reckless drivers*—an approach that is strongly recommended by the [National Traffic Safety Board](#), the [Road to Zero Coalition](#), the [Insurance Institute for Highway Safety](#) and others. **This provision should not be held up because other parts of the bill may be harder to implement.** We cannot continue to allow the *most reckless drivers* to terrorize DC residents and visitors with impunity. We cannot wait a year or more before we make our roads safer.

We highly recommend utilizing other funding mechanisms to implement ISA. DC already requires repeat drunk drivers to have Ignition Interlock installed on their vehicles; the same system that implements that accountability measure could be enhanced to support ISA. Using the existing framework would also be cost-efficient. ISA is not a program that needs to cost millions of dollars. In fact, if revenue from traffic cameras is invested in safe streets programs, as is required by law, that could help defray the cost of ISA roll out.

We urge the Council to look to other states and other ways similar measures have been implemented in a cost effective manner. If and when the programs begin to grow, resources could be added to deal with the growing demand. States often fund their ignition interlock programs with pass-through fees; that is, by adding a monthly charge, collected by the service provider, and remitted back to the state. This is something that is done in [Virginia](#), [Washington](#), [Tennessee](#), [Oregon](#), [Oklahoma](#), and [Arizona](#). **We recommend funding the ISA program by adding a similar fee to program participants, instead of holding up improvements in public safety because of budgetary constraints.**

If the Council is committed to upholding a Safe Systems Approach, then it should remember that there are other funding mechanisms available that adhere to that approach. One is to increase the cost of Residential Parking Permits (RPP).

We acknowledge the concerns about the additional fees typically associated with traffic tickets. But this is different. We are talking about the most egregious, most dangerous drivers who pose a risk to others. These are drivers who repeatedly flout the law and display a disregard for the safety of their fellow humans. The STEER Act continues to allow them to drive in addition to requiring accountability. It does not only issue tickets, but puts in place an existing technology that will minimize their ability to cause harm. We would not be seeing the 93% increase in fatalities if ISA had been funded and implemented over the last five years.

We are well aware that the FY25 budget is tight, and will require shared sacrifices. Failing to fund the STEER Act and ISA isn’t a sacrifice of services, or convenience: it is **sacrificing lives**. It is sacrificing one of the most basic needs of a city, which is the ability to get around safely.

Over the course of the budget hearings, we've heard of other safe streets and transportation sacrifices: the Circulator, protected bike lanes, the parking enforcement team, and safety infrastructure around schools.

If a budget is a reflection of one's values, then I think I can safely say that Mayor Bowser's budget reflects her outlook on safe streets, Vision Zero, transit, and driver accountability: she does not value it. We know, though, the same cannot be said for the Council. The Council has continued to show up for safe streets, for victims, and for accountability. Do not let this budget pass without it reflecting **your values** and **your vision** for safe streets across DC.

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This testimony is submitted in dedication to the 68 people who died due to traffic violence in the District since January 2023. These names do not include the 8,000+ crash survivors whose lives have been forever changed.

1. Carlos Enrique Christian, 24, died on Jan 15, 2023
2. Andy Cariño, 22, died on Feb 3, 2023
3. James Timothy Tarrants, 66, died on Feb 8, 2023
4. Eric Lyons, 49, died on Feb 10, 2023
5. Wayne Brown Savoy, 63, died on Feb 13, 2023
6. Mohammed Islam, 21, died on Feb 26, 2023
7. Mohamed Kamara, 42, died on Mar 15, 2023
8. Jonathan Cabrera Mendez, 23, died on Mar 15, 2023
9. Olvin Torres Velasquez, 22, died on Mar 15, 2023
10. Brandon Johnson, 38, died on Mar 18, 2023
11. Samuel Kesselman, 22, died on Mar 27, 2023
12. Chantice Cole, 35, died on Mar 31, 2023
13. Joshua Richmond, 27, died on Apr 14, 2023
14. Rico Knight, 45, died on Apr 20, 2023
15. Tim Juan Mundell, 46, died on Apr 20, 2023
16. Unnamed person died on Apr 20, 2023
17. Jin Park, 32, died on Apr 21, 2023
18. William Lamont Walker, 50, died on Apr 26, 2023
19. Rhyes Patrick-James Harris, 30, died on May 1, 2023
20. Chad Nieboer, 49, died on May 18, 2023
21. Carlos Aguiar, 43, died on May 21, 2023

Council roundtable on traffic enforcement held on May 23, 2023

22. Milosha Stephens, 49, died on May 27, 2023
23. Van Thomas Lee, 28, died on Jun 4, 2023
24. Madison Jones, 19, died on Jun 8, 2023
25. Dejuan George, 29, died on Jun 24, 2023

26. Samuel Walker, 60, died on Jun 27, 2023
27. Robert Hall, 49, died on Jun 30, 2023
28. Unnamed person died on Jul 4, 2023

The STEER Act is introduced on July 12, 2023

29. Bing Wong, 75, died on Jul 13, 2023
30. Jewel Regina Bazilio-Bellegarde, 68, died on Jul 20, 2023
31. Gatarua Stephen Gitu, 39, died on Jul 23, 2023
32. Unnamed person died on Aug 16, 2023
33. Marcus Hearn, 39, died on Aug 21, 2023
34. Johnny Lee Harrington, 66, died on Sep 4, 2023
35. Victor Serrano, 32, died on Sep 10, 2023
36. Unnamed person died on Sep 20, 2023
37. John Gibson, 34, died on Sep 21, 2023
38. Unnamed person died on Sep 26, 2023

The STEER Act public hearing with public witnesses is held on Oct 4, 2023

39. Don Antonio Coleman, 59, died on Oct 12, 2023
40. Wilmer Rosali Canales Ventura, 42, died on Oct 13, 2023
41. Nijad Huseynov, 24, died on Oct 21, 2023
42. Kendra Outlaw, 16, died on Oct 26, 2023

The STEER Act public hearing with government witnesses is held on Nov 1, 2023

43. Thaddeus Nelson, 28, died on Nov 5, 2023
44. Ivan Young, Jr., 34, died on Nov 5, 2023
45. William Bush, 65, died on Nov 11, 2023
46. Steven Padgett, 64, died on Nov 20, 2023
47. Maurice Oliver, 54, died on Dec 14, 2023
48. Samuel Thornton, 34, died on Dec 22, 2023
49. Unnamed person died on Dec 22, 2024
50. Michael Jerome Dennis, 38, died on Dec 25, 2023
51. Peter Black, 33, died on Dec 28, 2023
52. Kyree Amon Napper, 31, died on Dec 29, 2023
53. Michael Scott Hamlin, 54, died on Jan 3, 2024
54. Kevin Wims, 22, died on Jan 7, 2024

The STEER Act passes its first Council vote on Jan 9, 2024

55. Francisco Eduardo Santaella, 55, died on Jan 16, 2024
56. Jamil David, 50, died on Jan 20, 2024
57. Delaverlure Dunbar, 39, died on Jan 21, 2024

- 58. Torre Desmond Gray, Sr., 37, died on Jan 27, 2024
- 59. Zyinya Crump, 5, died on Jan 30, 2024

The STEER Act is unanimously approved by the Council on Feb 6, 2024

- 60. Diego Rodriguez-Florez, 26, died on Feb 9, 2024
- 61. Francisco Efrain Sorto Mendez, 27, died on Feb 12, 2024

The STEER Act is enacted without the Mayor's signature on Feb 29, 2024

- 62. Steven Jermaine Faison, Jr., 27, died on Mar 14, 2024
- 63. Edwin R. Morales-Martinez, 26, died on Apr 23, 2024
- 64. Unnamed person died on Mar 29, 2024
- 65. Ronald Jerome Jordan, Jr., 48, died on Mar 29, 2024
- 66. Michael Goldstone, 43, died on Apr 2, 2024
- 67. John Alfonso Candela, 89, died on Apr 10, 2024
- 68. Mohamed Samura, 18, died on Apr 15, 2024

The STEER Act became law on April 20, 2024

Funding for FY25 begins on Oct 1, 2024