

Taylor's Remarks

Mother of Fiona

My 13-month-old daughter, Fiona, died on July 1st, 2022. She was the happiest, most loving baby; always greeting everyone with her beautiful smile and wave. She loved to dance, and snuggle, and play peekaboo with her brother. She loved splashing in the tub and exploring the world around her. Many times, you hear tragic stories, and they begin with, "It started like any other day." But that is the thing, the morning my daughter died was not a typical morning for us. Many parts of our usual routine were off. My husband had been working double shifts for two days straight at the plant he helped manage. That day, he got home at 3 am, just to wake up again at 6:30am and start the day again. Fiona had been up multiple times during the night and was also tired and not feeling quite herself. A few days prior we had changed her from her infant "bucket" seat to a convertible stationary car seat. That morning, I took our son to school and my husband was supposed to take Fiona to daycare. I can still see her looking at me as they walked out the door. Hours later, my world ended. Whether it was lack of sleep, work stress, a change in our routine, or most likely, a combination of all of them, he didn't even remember putting Fiona in the car.

My husband is the most loving, devoted father. He and Fiona had such a special bond. I remember watching him take her out to the yard so she could feel the grass on her feet, holding her all night in the steamy bathroom when she got croup, and walking her around the house holding her hands as she started taking her first steps. We never got to see her take those steps on her own. There is so much we will never get to see.

I relive July 1st over and over again; analyzing all of the "what ifs" that could have made a difference. So many small changes I wish I could go back and make that would completely change the outcome of that awful day. But time doesn't work that way and I will have to live with my "what ifs" forever. I can never go back and not change her car seat or buy the baby car seat mirror I had seen at the store the day before. I can't tell my husband to go back to bed, or just take both kids to school and daycare myself. Those things I cannot change; but I can fight for the technology that would have saved Fiona's life. I can fight for these simple changes that can save other children's lives; to save other families from living with the agony and unending pain of losing a child; of living with the "what ifs" and desperation of wanting to change what can never be changed. It is a type of debilitating longing that words cannot even describe.

I stand here today to implore the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration and the U.S. Department of Transportation to implement the overdue Hot Car Final Rule.

For years, families like mine have been contacting NHTSA and DOT officials to ask for their leadership to move forward the final rule. Receiving no response has been a painful slap in the face. Learning that occupant detection systems can be added to vehicles for less than \$20 was debilitating. I wish to ask DOT Secretary Pete Buttigieg – are your children worth it? NHTSA Administrator, Sophie Shulman, is your child worth it?

There is no reason any other child should lose their life when the technology to save them already exists.