



New York Drunk Driving Press Conference Remarks

Date: Friday, May 24, 2019

Time: Noon

Location: 250 Broadway, 22nd Floor, Room 2225

MCs: Assemblyman Ortiz and MADD National President Helen Witty

Contact: Camille O'Brien, 845-313-1709 (cell; text if trouble reaching her by phone)

11:30 a.m.: Arrival

Noon: Assistant Speaker Ortiz opens .05 press conference and introduces Helen Witty

12:05: MADD National President Helen Witty speaks

Assemblyman Ortiz introduces Jennifer Homendy

12:08: Jennifer Homendy, National Transportation Safety Board Member speaks

Assemblyman Ortiz introduces Tara Gill

12:10: Tara Gill, Senior Director of Advocacy and Communications for the National Safety Council speaks

Assemblyman Ortiz introduces Kelly Nantel

12:12: Kelly Nantel, Vice President of Advocacy and Communications for the National Safety Council speaks

Helen Witty introduces the McMorris family

12:15: John McMorris, Arianna McMorris and Alisa McMorris each speak (they will introduce each other)

Helen Witty introduces Marcus Kowal

12:25: Marcus Kowal of Liam's Life Foundation speaks

12:30: Assemblyman Ortiz opens up the floor for questions from media



Kelly Nantel, VP of Communications and Advocacy, National Safety Council

Thank you, **Assistant Speaker Ortiz** for introducing legislation to make New Yorkers safer.

We are so honored to join you today and to raise awareness about the crisis we are facing on our roads. Everyday day in this country, we lose more than 100 people to car crashes. 100 people. Every day.

At the National Safety Council, we work to eliminate preventable deaths at work, at home, and on the road. And we've been doing it for more than 100 years.

With Memorial Day weekend right around the corner, we estimate that nearly 380 people may die on our nation's roads this holiday weekend. Road deaths spike every holiday weekend because traveling and imbibing don't mix well.

When it comes to road safety, impairment remains a leading cause of crashes and fatalities.

Facing the impact impaired driving has had on each of the families here today, we know we have to do more to change our culture and expectations around drunk driving.

I want to applaud the NTSB for first raising the flag in 2013 by calling for states to lower the legal BAC.

It was controversial and provocative, but it was also scientifically sound. There are naysayers out there that will have you believe these measures are draconian, that they are bad for business. They try to deflect and stretch the truth around our accepted culture of drinking and driving.



In part because of these obstacles, impaired driving has been one of the toughest barriers to overcome in eliminating roadway fatalities.

But the science on impairment is crystal clear. Impairment doesn't begin at .08, or even at .05. Impairment begins with first drink. Our countermeasures must reflect this fact.

And if the beverage industry is serious about responsibility, they should be our partner in this.

We really appreciate being here with MADD. Their support ensures that the families sharing their stories today, and so many others suffering the same heartbreak, won't be soon forgotten.

With NTSB, Advocates for Highway and Auto Safety, MADD, Liam's Life Foundation and the National Safety Council all working together, I know we can make roads safer here in New York and beyond.

While alcohol-related driving fatalities have been on a [downward trend](#) in New York, there are still nearly 6,000 people injured in alcohol-related crashes each year.

Twenty-eight percent of road fatalities here involve an impaired driver. We can and should get it even lower.

We need to remember these aren't just statistics. Real people are being affected every day. And we know victims suffer long after the crash scene is gone.

We need to try new things to get better results.

There's no magic bullet to eliminate all crashes. But, what we need is a sound approach to law enforcement, education, and enacting common sense laws.



It makes sense to use all the tools in our toolbox.

By lowering the legal threshold in line with best practices followed the world over, we can actually make a difference and save lives.

I am encouraged by everyone joining us today, organizations that are close partners in the Road to Zero Coalition, working eliminate roadway fatalities.

Thank you. Let's continue to do all we can to keep each other safe.