



**Testimony from Jessica Hart on behalf of DC Families for Safe Streets  
for the Committee on Transportation & the Environment  
Performance Oversight Hearing for the District Department of Transportation  
held on Monday, February 27, 2023**

To the Committee on Transportation & the Environment:

My name is Jessica Hart. I am a Ward 5 resident and the mother of Allison Hart, who was 5-years-old when she became traffic violence victim #28 in 2021. I am here today on behalf of the 80 members of the DC chapter of Families for Safe Streets. We are family members whose loved ones were killed or severely injured on District streets.

This testimony is submitted in dedication to the 38 people who died due to traffic violence in the District since the last DDOT performance oversight hearing held on February 18, 2022. The names listed in our written testimony do not include the 5,500 crash survivors whose lives have been forever changed.

We thank the Council for passing recent safe streets legislation, but we are dismayed by DDOT's slow or non-implementation of these life-saving laws that we fought so hard to win. We have shared our heart wrenching stories. We've learned traffic engineering on the fly. We've attended ANC and Council meetings. It's not enough. My testimony today highlights the burden we put on residents to identify the changes needed, and shows how DDOT prioritizes moving cars over human safety.

**Traffic Safety Investigation/Inputs.** Many have already spoken about the changes to DDOT's process by which it considers and implements residents' requests for safe street design. Allow me to add a personal reflection. The first change to the TSI process came in October 2021, not long after my daughter was killed. I remember the press conference at which Director Lott, standing next to Mayor Bowser, invoked my daughter's name as an impetus to make it easier for DC residents to have a say on the safety of our streets.

I watched in September 2022 as neighbors, friends, and strangers rallied to make traffic safety requests across the city. Over 400 requests were made as part of the All for Allie campaign – so many requests that it essentially broke the system. **Why must residents** be the catalyst for the changes that this Council has legislated and the goals that this government has adopted?

At a recent ANC 5B meeting, a DDOT representative explained the new TSI process as this: we can request an evaluation and DDOT engineers will review and make a recommendation. If the engineers do **not** think traffic calming is warranted, then that's it. There is no way for a resident – someone who knows the area, who witnesses danger daily – to appeal that decision.

At this same ANC meeting, it became clear that this is not the case in the opposite scenario. If the engineers decide traffic safety measures are warranted but residents oppose them, then a vocal minority can undermine the stated Vision Zero goals of this legislature and administration during the notice of intent (NOI) period. There is no similar period for residents to oppose DDOT's decisions that favor the status quo. The **burden of proof** to bring about positive change is too high.

**Unsafe conditions that are created because of construction sites.** On February 8, 2023, James Tarrants was struck and killed while trying to walk through sidewalks that were closed due to a construction site along Rhode Island Avenue NE. As so many do, the DDOT-approved "traffic control plan" for this construction project prioritized the convenience of drivers over pedestrian safety—James's safety. This is despite a law passed ten years ago that required "safe accommodations" for pedestrians and bicyclists – a law often ignored.

Unsafe traffic control plans should not be approved in the first place, and more requirements and/or enforcement needs to be in place to ensure that developers and construction managers do not create unsafe conditions. There are questions the Committee should be asking DDOT: how are these plans reviewed, and does more training for reviewers need to be in place? Should there be a manager or consultant who solely focuses on reviewing for safety? Does 311 need to be modified so the everyday person can submit a violation (despite this being **yet another** burden of proof we're placing on residents)? Does DDOT need more public space inspectors to quickly identify violations, issue stop work orders, and require safe conditions to be put in place? Maybe answers to questions like these could have saved James's life.

Lastly, we are concerned about DDOT's failure to win funds from the historic Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, specifically from the new Safe Streets and Roads for All grant program that awarded \$800 million to 510 projects across 49 states and Puerto Rico. DDOT should secure as much funding as possible to implement safety improvements for not only the recently identified High Injury Network, but also any traffic safety measures any time DDOT routinely repairs a street instead of residents who have to beg for them when a larger project is finally in the works.

Families for Safe Streets is ready to support the Council and DDOT in creating a city that is safe for all road users, and we welcome the opportunity to continue this conversation. Thank you.

*This testimony is submitted in dedication to the 38 people who died due to traffic violence in the District since the last DDOT performance oversight hearing held on Friday, February 18, 2022. These names do not include the 5,500 crash survivors whose lives have been forever changed.*

- Unnamed person.
- Anthony Shaw, 48, from Southeast DC.
- Unnamed person.
- Steven Roy, 32, from Southeast DC.
- Rakesh Patel, 33, from Silver Spring, MD.
- Terese Dudnick Taffer, 73, from Northwest DC.
- Jane Bloom, 76, from Northwest DC.
- Javon Leach, 13, from Washington, DC.
- Michael Thomas, 29, from Northwest DC.
- Joseph Robinson, 52.
- Unnamed person.
- Demetrius Fultz, 47, from Southeast DC.
- Amir Fultz, 10, from Southeast DC.
- Unnamed person.
- Clinton Covington, 66, from Northwest DC.
- Kaidyn Green, 9, from Southeast DC.
- James Herndon, 29, from Hyattsville, MD.
- Michael Hawkins Randall, 70, from Northeast DC.
- Charles Jackson, 64, from Northeast DC.
- Michael Gordon, 65, from Northwest DC.
- Shawn O'Donnell, 40, from Northwest DC.
- Timothy Fingarson, 66, from Charles Town, WV.
- Unnamed person.
- Jasmine Butler, 25, from Southeast DC.
- Jefferson Leonel Garcia-Yanez, 25, from Monrovia, MD.
- Venancie Musabe, 60, from Fredericksburg, VA.
- Darryl Leak, 42, from Northeast DC.
- Ralph Patrick Williams, 72, from Northeast DC.
- Bredarius Lanford, 28, from Southeast DC.
- Richard William Farmer, 49, from Greensboro, NC.
- Jonathan Plater, 30, from Lanham, MD.
- Sheda'sa Thompson, 25, from Northeast DC.
- Cherice Allen, 41, from Southeast DC.
- Shuyu Sui, 31, from McLean, VA.
- Carlos Enrique Christian, 24, from Northwest DC.
- Andy Cariño, 22, from Severna Park, MD.
- James Timothy Tarrants, 66, from Northwest DC
- Eric Lyons, 49, from Northwest DC.
- Wayne Brown Savoy, 63, from Southeast DC.