

Area woman promotes law for next-of-kin database



Carmela Wiant hugs a picture of her son, who died in an auto accident in Columbus more than a year ago, as she talks about the confusion when authorities tried to contact his next of kin at her Mechanicsburg home. Because of the confusion, Wiant wasn't notified for several hours that her son had been killed. Staff photo by Marshall Gorby

Gov. Strickland expected to sign bill to create a statewide link with the BMV, allowing adults to provide family information

By Matt Sanctis
Staff Writer

MECHANICSBURG — Carmela Wiant still breaks down sobbing when she thinks about the night her son died in a Columbus car accident about a year ago.

Lawmakers approved legislation this week that would create a statewide database with the Bureau of Motor Vehicles, allowing adults to provide their next of kin to be contacted in case of an emergency. The bill will be passed on to Ohio Gov. Ted Strickland, who is expected to sign it into law.

Wiant of Mechanicsburg was upset she was not able to learn in person that her son, David Money, 23, was killed when he lost control of his van on a wet road on Interstate 270 in southern Franklin County more than a year ago. Instead, hospital staff told her of his death by telephone.

"I just took my phone and I threw

it down the hallway," Wiant said.

Part of the problem, she said, was that it was difficult for deputies to find her quickly. Sgt. Carl Hickey, the Franklin County officer who handled the crash, said deputies and troopers often depend on driver's licenses and employment records to determine next of kin in serious crashes.

"You're trying to piece together who they are and the person in their life who needs to be notified just by going through their stuff," he said.

Hickey and Wiant came up with the idea during a two-hour conversation after the crash. She spent the last year contacting legislators once they realized such a database didn't already exist.

Sen. Keith Faber, R-Celina, said the law will be called the "Money-Burge Act" named after Wiant's son and Steve Burge, a Columbus-area man who died in a separate crash.

The information in the data-

base will only be available to first responders, and there was no opposition to the bill, he said. Residents will eventually be able to provide next-of-kin information online, or when applying for a driver's license or vehicle registration.

"It makes sense," Faber said. "It doesn't really cost the state any money.

A collage of photos from Money's memorial service still rests on Wiant's piano, and nearly a dozen of his little league jerseys are stitched together to form a comforter on her living room sofa. But if just a few mothers are able to be reached in time to be with their loved ones after an accident, she said it will make her son's life that much more meaningful.

"If I can help one mom or one dad to never go through it, then I did what I was supposed to do," she said.

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