

## Parents of texting victim vow to return

Russell and Kim Hurd, an Abingdon couple who lost their 26-year-old daughter in a Florida highway crash that was blamed on a trucker who was sending a text message, helped persuade the Maryland General Assembly to pass a bill this year banning the practice of sending text messages while driving.

They told the Maryland Highway Safety Foundation Thursday that they would be back in Annapolis next year in an effort to extend the ban to reading text messages and using hand-held cell phones. The couple appeared before legislative committees to tell their story earlier this year.

Russell Hurd spoke at a breakfast organized by the foundation at Apple Ford in Columbia after showing a **video** tracing the life of his daughter, Heather Leigh Hurd, from her birth in 1981 to her death on Jan. 3, 2008 -- the day she was supposed to meet with her parents to plan her wedding.

Hurd called the bill that passed this year, which bans texting behind the wheel but allows a driver to check incoming messages, "a watered-down version," but added, "We'll take it."

"We will fight on for a comprehensive ban on hand-held cell phones in 2010," he said.

Hurd also called upon employers to impose rules requiring their workers to use seat belts and avoid texting while driving company vehicles.

One employer who took action this week was Howard County Executive Ken Ulman, who told the foundation he has issued an executive order banning the use of hand-held electronic devices to write, send or read text messages or e-mails while driving county cars.

Ulman's order does not include speaking on hand-held cell phones, but he said he is considering taking such an action as well. Foundation co-chairman said Ulman is the first county executive in Maryland to issue an executive order prohibiting all forms of texting.