



Green Cross for Safety® Awards 2022 Finalist | Advocate

Mothers Against Drunk Driving® “War Room”

Mothers Against Drunk Driving® (MADD) has worked for decades to end drunk driving, helping in that time to reduce drunk driving deaths by 52% through education and enforcement campaigns coupled with state and federal legislative reforms. However, MADD found progress toward its goal of zero deaths and injuries had plateaued.

- Drunk driving kills someone in the U.S. every 45 minutes and injures someone every two minutes
- Drunk driving crashes account for 30% of U.S. traffic deaths
- The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) released an estimate that 9,560 people were killed in traffic crashes in the first quarter of 2022 – a 7% increase over the first quarter of 2021 – indicating that lives taken by someone’s choice to drive impaired will reach the highest levels in over a decade.

MADD knew the auto industry had systems available to keep intoxicated individuals from operating a vehicle – technology the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety found would prevent more than 9,400 traffic deaths annually. However, the auto industry demonstrated no sense of urgency about installing any of the many existing technologies that could prevent impaired driving.

A rulemaking by NHTSA was needed that would lead to a safety standard to equip all new cars with drunk driving prevention technology. Getting NHTSA to engage in such a rulemaking, however, would require an act of Congress.

MADD knew a powerful force of advocates would be needed to move this lifesaving legislation through Congress. So, MADD established a “War Room” of former MADD presidents, more than 100 volunteer family members of drunk driving victims and injured survivors, and staff. The “War Room” met weekly for nearly a year to strategize and advocate for passage of legislation requiring automakers to install drunk driving prevention systems in all new cars.



Rep. Debbie Dingell (D-MI) reintroduced the HALT Drunk Driving Act (HR 2138) in 2021, and Sen. Ben Ray Lujan (D-NM) introduced the RIDE Act (S.1331) in the Senate – both with bipartisan cosponsors.

The “War Room” waged intensive education and advocacy efforts, including events with key members of Congress and testifying in committee hearings. This outreach initiative was led by crash victims, survivors and victims’ families who shared their personal stories in media interviews and op-eds to reach key legislators’ hometown media markets, from New York to Hawaii and Michigan to Mississippi.

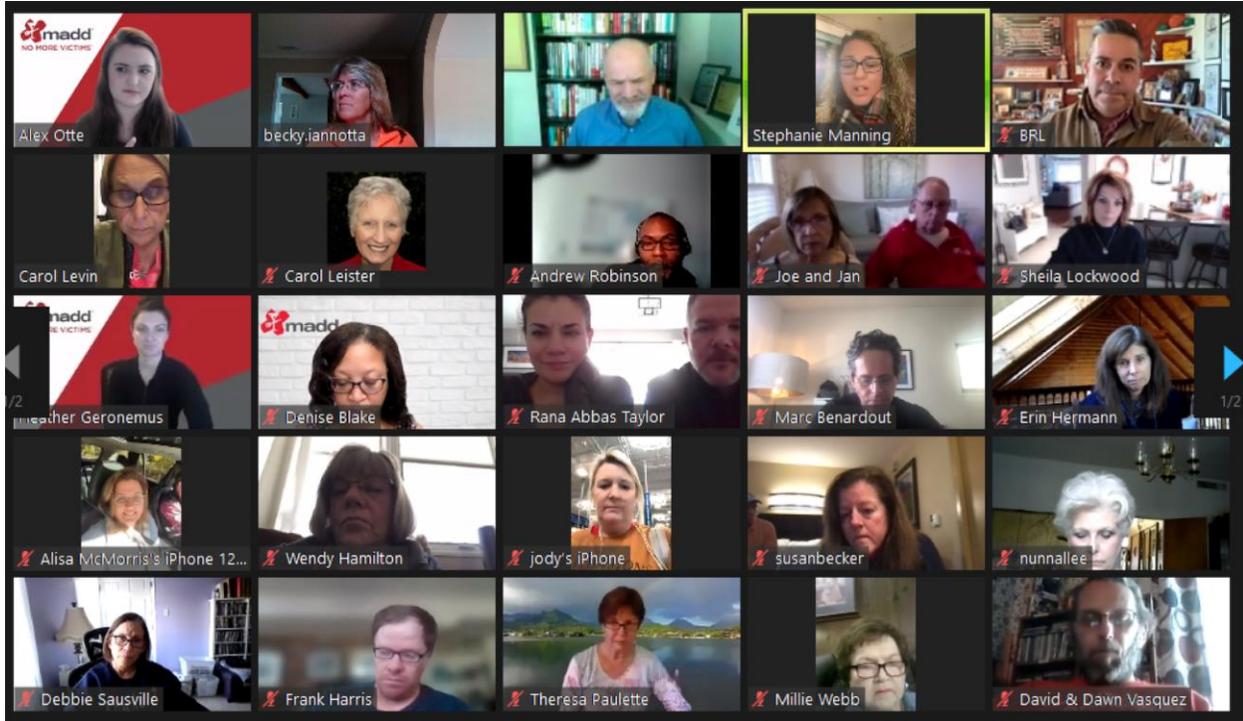
“War Room” participants advocated courageously in honor of their loved ones and as injured survivors of impaired driving. Each “War Room” meeting opened by listening to a group member share how their life was shattered by a drunk driver. The “War Room” calls were emotionally tough, but they energized the victims, who created a powerful community for change.

The auto manufacturers’ lobby had blocked, slowed or weakened prior attempts to require new auto safety engineering and technology to prevent crashes, deaths and injuries. The “War Room” families’ engagement – directly reaching out to their members of Congress who serve on the key committees overseeing auto safety – proved to be the game changer.

In November 2021, MADD’s “War Room” push paid off. The requirement for NHTSA to develop a safety standard for passive drunk driving prevention technology in all new cars was included in the larger Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act. Congress passed the bill on Nov. 5, 2021, and President Biden signed it into law on Nov. 15, 2021. In celebration, “War Room” members presented champions in Congress with MADD’s “Legislative Hero Award” to recognize their steadfast commitment to saving lives with auto safety technology.

The “War Room” continues to play an essential and strategic role during the second phase of MADD’s campaign so that new cars equipped with the NHTSA-directed technology can start rolling off the assembly line in 2026-2027. Victims and survivors are prepared to activate at any time to stress the critical importance of NHTSA issuing a final safety standard for this technology within the timeframe prescribed under the new law. Because of these MADD warriors, the end of drunk driving is within reach.

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U.S. Senator Ben Ray Luján (D-NM) (top right corner) joins a MADD “War Room” meeting.



At a U.S. Capitol news conference in 2021, MADD volunteers Ken Snyder, Rana Abbas Taylor and her husband Tom Taylor, and MADD National President Alex Otte joined traffic safety champions in Congress – including House Consumer Protection and Commerce Subcommittee Chair Rep. Jan Schakowsky (D-IL) and Rep. Kathleen Rice (D-NY), among other safety advocates – to urge passage of bipartisan legislation to eliminate drunk driving.