

What is Dillon's Law, 2024 H7373 S2202? How can We properly honor Dillon Viens and support Dillon's Law?

By Micheal Tillinghast

The question; "What is Dillon's law?" is something one might have asked while attending a Judiciary Hearing this Year at the Rhode Island General Assembly. On paper the Legislation reads to rename the Law after Dillon Viens and references the safe storage of firearms. At the recent Judiciary Hearing, however, I met several of Dillon's Family Members and Friends, and then I sat down with Dillon's Father to document the story behind Dillon's Law, and learned what Dillon's Law represents. Dillon's law is an effort to increase the amount of time a Person would serve for having an unsecured firearm alongside an effort to rename the Law to keep Dillon's story alive as a reminder to protect Youth in Rhode Island from unsecured Firearms.

Dillon's Father wants People to know Who Dillon was. In His words, Dillon had the biggest heart and would talk to anyone. Everyone wanted to hang out with Him. He had a special touch and frequently resolved arguments. Dillon loved to BMX Bike and enjoyed biking around Johnston and Downtown Providence with His friends. Dillon was born and raised in Johnston. From the Day He was born, Dillon loved to fish. He would enjoy walking the paths at Johnston Memorial Park with His Grandmother and Mother. Dave is now interested in working with the Mayor of Johnston to create a memorial bench in Johnston Memorial Park to honor His memory. Dave is also considering hosting a BMX Bike Event to bring the Community together to keep Dylan's name alive, raise awareness about Dillon's Law, and support protecting youth from unsecured firearms.

Dillon's Father has discussed the case with the media a few times. Initially He set up a rally outside of the house in Johnston where Dillon perished. He made signs about securing firearms, and signs about how the investigation was open and ongoing. Eventually the residents painted the walls, moved out of the house, and attempted to sell it while the investigation was ongoing. Dave protested outside of the open house. While speaking to the media outside of the open house, He first met one of the Realtors working to sell the house. He was adamant that the house should not be sold while there was as active investigation related to the property. Another realtor called Dave and prayed inside of the home. In response, the Realtor didn't want anything to do with selling the house. Eventually the Property was put in another Person's name and the owner sold several other properties in Rhode Island.

After the incident He says He felt like Law Enforcement was not putting any pressure on Mario, the individual Who owned the home and the allegedly unsecured firearms. He compared the situation to cases where getaway vehicles were impounded and not accessible indefinitely. Dave then asked how a hypothetical getaway vehicle would remain inaccessible while the home was able to be placed up for sale? Shouldn't the crime scene be

secured knowing that so much had happened at the site? He also asked how Someone Who was on Probation could have so many loose firearms? These are some of the questions that have been raised since he became an activist. Another controversy He says People have mentioned since the incident is the status of individuals under 18 having unlicensed and licensed firearms. As new charges are levied in the case, He now asks whether the Prison System will have a positive or negative effect on the teenager facing trial. Mario is likely to serve several Years, with less time and lesser charges than the unnamed teenager, if convicted of possessing the unsecured firearms related to the case. If the General Assembly were to pass Dillon's Law, owning an unsecured firearm and contributing to the delinquency of a minor would equate to a five-Year sentence. Dillon's Father is adamant that would guarantee Parents Justice in future cases.

Dillon perished when an unsecured firearm wielded by another teenager tragically took His life. The Police initially reported the incident was an accident, however today Mario and the Teen Who allegedly pulled the trigger are facing charges for the crime. David does not want the incident to be treated like an accident, and does not believe it was, believing instead that His Son deserves Justice. After Dillon perished, approximately an hour had allegedly passed before the Police were called, giving the homeowner and the teenagers enough time to wash the firearm and clean the crime scene. Now that one of the teens has been charged with manslaughter, this gives Dave some hope that He might soon find the answers and closure He is looking for. Dave is very comfortable with the manslaughter charges and is grateful to be on the path to Justice. Dillon's Father wants People to know Dillon did not take his own life. He is unsure if He can attend the trial because the suspect is a minor and the case will be heard in Family Court. He wants to do more to keep Dillon's memory alive as the case plays out in court. He is considering hosting a BMX Bike event to honor Dillon's memory.

Mario, the owner of the allegedly unsecured firearms, has been arrested in recent Days and has been charged with five misdemeanor counts for the unsecured firearms, and an additional charge of contributing to the delinquency of a minor. At the time of the crime, Mario was on five Years probation for Check Fraud. Dave asked Why He was allowed to possess so many firearms while on probation. According to Dave, Mario's initial testimony conflicted with other testimony. Dave hopes that these new charges will allow Mario to be more honest about what occurred. It is very clear that Mario should not have had so many unsecured guns, nor should they have been in the hands of accident-prone children.

Dave explained that the effort to pass Dillon's Law had been initiated after He learned that having an unsecured firearm was a misdemeanor while protesting. Mario had initially been held for less than two days on the charge. Dillon's Law would increase the penalty for having an unsecured firearm from a misdemeanor with a non-mandatory one Year sentence, to a Felony with Five Years in Prison while also renaming the Law to honor Dillon. This Law is championed by Dillon Vein's Father David Veins. Dillon tragically passed when

an unsecured firearm was discharged in the hands of another teenager, and Dillon's Father believes renaming the Law would memorialize that example into any reference to the Law. This would remind folks to secure their firearms for the sake of protecting Children, He explained. Dillon's Law currently has a Petition Dave says seeks to inform People about what happened in a way that will raise awareness about the meaning behind the Law to protect other families from tragedies resulting from unsecured firearms.

There is quite a lesson to be learned from Dillon's Law as it is considered In the Rhode Island General Assembly. Firearms should be secured. Teenagers should not be left with unsecured firearms. Firearms should be held carefully and never pointed in the direction of another Person. Dillon's Law is currently being held for further Study by the House Judiciary Committee. If You would like to help honor Dillon and increase the Penalty for having an unsecured Firearm, please write Your Representatives in the Rhode Island General Assembly and ask them to pass Dillon's Law. Renaming this bill would serve as a memorial and reminder to secure Firearms to protect Rhode Island's Youth.