



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

April 30, 2015

**Contact:** Brian Zumhagen 646-873-6008

917-744-2397 (mobile)

## **The Right of Way Law Protects NYC's Walking Families**

*Families for Safe Streets Launches Ad Campaign to Send Message that No Driver Can Be Exempt*

Families for Safe Streets, a group of New Yorkers who have lost loved ones or have been injured in traffic crashes, is launching an ad campaign calling on the City Council to defend the Right of Way Law. Transport unions want to make MTA bus drivers exempt from this lifesaving Vision Zero law, but victims' families say any driver who kills or maims a person who is in a New York City crosswalk with the right of way must be held accountable.

“The City Council has demonstrated great leadership over the past year with their support of Vision Zero. But now, a special interest group is threatening to erase all the progress the City has made in the effort to end traffic fatalities and serious injuries,” said Amy Tam-Liao, a founding member of Families for Safe Streets. Her daughter Allison Liao was killed by a driver who failed to yield and hit the 3-year-old as she walked hand-in-hand with her grandmother in a Queens crosswalk in 2013. “Even though we’re a small group without the budget to hire a big PR firm, we decided to make our own ads to send the message that the Right of Way Law protects New York’s walking families,” Tam-Liao said.

Before the Council unanimously approved the Right of Way Law last year, hitting a pedestrian in a crosswalk was a mere traffic violation that came with a summons and a fine. But even those traffic tickets were often thrown out by the DMV (as was the case after Allison Liao’s death). The Right of Way Law changed that by creating a misdemeanor charge for the deadly infraction of failure to yield. But in order for that deterrent to be effective, no driver can be above the law.

One of the new ads features Families for Safe Streets founding members Debbie and Harold Kahn, whose son Seth Kahn was killed in a Manhattan crosswalk in 2009 when an MTA bus driver failed to yield to him. “He had the right of way, but the driver didn’t stop,” the ad reads. “If the Right of Way Law had existed then, we believe that bus driver would have been more careful, and our son would be alive today. MTA bus drivers say the law shouldn’t apply to them. For our son Seth, we need every driver to follow the law.”

Last year alone, MTA bus drivers killed eight people who were in crosswalks with the right of way. Transport unions claim that bus operators can’t do their jobs without occasionally hitting pedestrians, because of blind spots and other vehicle design flaws. While Families for Safe Streets supports the unions’ call for the MTA to pursue technical solutions to safety problems, the focus must remain on driver accountability. Every driver has to follow the law.

View the ads and learn more about the Right of Way Law at [www.DefendRoW.org](http://www.DefendRoW.org)