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SEATTLE -- Back in February, Michele Black lost her husband when he was hit by a car while riding his bike to work.

Kevin Black - a father, a scientist and an avid cyclist - was just 39.

"And I don't want it to happen again," said Michele Black.

The grief-stricken widow spoke up at a crowded bicycle summit at Seattle City Hall on Wednesday night in support of tougher laws against dangerous drivers.

"The person behind the wheel was negligent; their behavior was the cause of someone's death. Why are they allowed to get behind the wheel of a car?" she said.

In August, a Seattle city ordinance that made it a misdemeanor to kill or injure someone in a traffic accident was overturned by the state Court of Appeals.

As a result, drivers involved in deadly crashes can only be charged with felony vehicular homicide, and the charge only applies if they were drunk, on drugs or acting recklessly at the time of the crash.

According to statistics, some 500 people are killed or badly injured in traffic accidents in Washington state every year. But many of the offenders can't be charged with any type of felony, and instead are just given traffic tickets.

"It just seems like you can break a whole lot of laws at the same time and you're still not being reckless in the legal sense," said one man at the summit.

Cascade Bicycle Club is pushing to broaden the state's negligent driving misdemeanor charge. Advocates

are hoping the legislative session will breed changes.

"There is a fight going on," said Sen. Adam Kline, D-Seattle. "It's probably going to take several years -- that's the nature of politics. Good, hard litigation typically doesn't happen the first year out. And it may not happen the second or third, but it will happen."

If more jail time isn't possible, cyclists want to see driver's licenses yanked or penalties dramatically increased. There has even been talk of a creation of a citizen-run database to publicly keep tabs on bad drivers and their dangerous actions.

"I don't know how, but somehow it has to be against the law to not pay attention," said Chris Stanley.

"And what I'd like to see in the law is something that can prevent incidents like that from happening again," said Isla Govan.