

To: Judiciary Committee
From: Lawrence R. Pontbriant
Re: Raised Bill 687, An Act Concerning Automatic External Defibrillators
Date: March 14, 2008

Good Day Senator McDonald, Senator Handley, Members of the Public Health Committee, friends and supporters of AED legislation.

We are here to communicate our support for Raised Bill 687. Our interest in Automated External Defibrillators started on August 16th 2008 when our son Larry collapsed in front of our eyes with a Sudden Cardiac Arrest during a community athletic event in Norwich Connecticut. His heart had gone into ventricular fibrillation halfway through a 3 mile road race, a race he competed in many times before as part of his training for other sports. We were at Larry's side within 20 seconds of collapse. He was given CPR at the scene and was eventually revived by paramedics using an AED, only to die three days later due to brain swelling. The swelling was due to damage caused by the amount of time Larry's brain had reduced oxygen. CPR under the best conditions is effective to add precious minutes to a rescue, however if the victims own heartbeat is not restored within 6 – 10 minutes the chances of survival are low. In Larry's case the AED arrived on the scene too late to save his life. The fact that Larry's heart was restarted by an AED and pumped strongly for three days demonstrates that early defibrillation could have saved his life. My wife and I are now committed to improving the safety of Connecticut youth sports by advocating education on Sudden Cardiac Arrest in young athletes, expanded CPR and AED training for those working with our youth and widespread distribution of AEDs during athletic events.

SCA is the leading cause of death in young athletes. The lack of AEDs in schools and athletic events in Connecticut is an appalling situation which should absolutely be corrected as soon as possible.

My wife and I do not for a moment believe the entire financial burden of correcting the limited AEDs in Connecticut should be on the public sector. We do however strongly believe that the public sector must provide concise, unambiguous laws that will create the environment for the private sector to take action without fear of frivolous civil lawsuits.

We have reviewed Connecticut's record on proposing AED bills which include any Good Samaritan provisions extending beyond the immediate rescuers. As parents of a child who died of SCA, the pain of reviewing, "The Nature and Sources of Opposition" statements is extreme. We realize who and what has historically blocked improved Good Samaritan AED laws and hope that Bill 687 will finally meet all the criteria necessary and become law. We know that any changes must come through this Judiciary Committee and we ask you to seriously consider passing Bill 687, or provide the type of constructive guidance that will create a bill to enable private sector action in placing AEDs for public use.

We support Bill 687 as it currently reads and would also support extending coverage to all Connecticut schools, but not at the risk of Bill 687 not passing as is into law this year.

Thank-you all for this opportunity to speak on this proposed AED bill and to tell our story of why it is so important to the youth of Connecticut Bill 687 pass into law.