STATE OF CONNECTICUT

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

TESTIMONY PRESENTED BEFORE THE JUDICIARY COMMITTEE
March 14, 2008

Leonard Guercia, Department of Public Health 509-7975

Senate Bill 687 - An Act Concerning Automatic External Defibrillators

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The Department of Public Health supports Senate Bill 687. The Department of Public Health recognizes the importance of early defibrillation for sudden cardiac arrest victims and encourages the proliferation of automatic external defibrillators (AED) throughout Connecticut.

Sections 1 and 2 of this bill proposes each health club and each athletic department of an institution of higher education in Connecticut provide and maintain at least one AED on the premises. This will have a positive effect on current and future public access to AED, which in turn will increase the survival rate for cardiac arrest patients. Section 2 of this bill states that the athletic department of each institution of higher education shall develop and implement a policy consistent with this section concerning the availability and use of automatic external defibrillators during athletic activities and events. However, the creation of policies within higher education institutions is the responsibility of the University trustees. The Department asks the Committee consider changing the language to reflect university trustees developing and implementing the policy.

The American Heart Association (AHA) states that approximately 335,000 people in the United States die each year from coronary heart disease before reaching a hospital. Most of these deaths result from sudden cardiac arrest and the chances of survival for a victim of cardiac arrest decrease 7-10 percent for each minute that elapses after the arrest, very few successful resuscitations are performed after ten minutes. People working out at a health club or participating in an athletic event may be at greater risk for sudden cardiac arrest during and shortly after vigorous exercise. A health club or athletic department with an AED on site will be able to deliver potentially life saving care immediately after an arrest, which will increase chances of survival. Health clubs and athletic departments with individuals trained in CPR/AED will further increase a sudden cardiac arrest victims chance of survival. These individuals will be able to react quickly and initiate the "Chain of Survival" which includes immediate notification of emergency medical services, CPR, utilization of an AED, advanced life support care. Additionally, AED training consists of a short training session that anyone can participate in and no previous medical or emergency training is required. The number of AEDs in public and private settings is increasing throughout Connecticut as awareness of their life saving potential is spread. Health clubs and athletic departments would be a logical progression for public access AED programs due to the number of individuals that participate in activities in both locations, and the potential for sudden cardiac arrest during physical exertion. The inclusion of training requirements, integration with local emergency medical services, maintenance programs, and expansion of liability protection, will lead to the proliferation of AEDs and CPR/AED trained citizens across Connecticut.

Section 3 of this bill amends current law to expand the liability protection under the Good Samaritan law and will help Connecticut businesses and organizations that have been reluctant to initiate an AED program because of immunity questions participate in the proliferation of AEDs. The expanded protection will allow these entities to develop AED programs and expand public access to AEDs. This Bill will remove a major barrier to the proliferation of AEDs throughout the state.

The bill achieves the goals the Department of Public Health has regarding Public Access Defibrillation Programs such as increasing the number of AEDs in Connecticut, integrating public AED programs with local emergency medical service providers, encouraging CPR/AED training, ensuring a organized and constructive maintenance program, and expanding the liability protection under the Good Samaritan Law to include the person or entity providing or maintaining the AED.

Thank you for your consideration of the Department's views on this bill.

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