

3/10/2008

To: The Members of the Public Health Committee:

RE: House Bill 5812, An Act Concerning the Availability of Automatic External Defibrillators for Public Use

From: Conor Clendennin – Quaker Hill Resident

My name is Conor Clendennin and I am currently a sophomore at Norwich Free Academy. I run cross country and indoor and outdoor track. I am writing to you to appeal to you for help in a very important matter: AEDs.

On August 16th this summer a good friend of mine, Larry Pontbriant, was halfway through a three mile fun run at Mohegan Park in Norwich, Connecticut, when he collapsed. Despite CPR being started and 911 being called by the time the ambulance got to him and he was hooked up to the defibrillator, Larry was in cardiac arrest. Too much time had passed and Larry's brain had swelled and he was in a coma. While at Connecticut Children's Medical Center, the doctors determined that the CPR was effective and that Larry's organs were still in good shape. However, on August 19th Larry Pontbriant was pronounced brain dead. His organs were donated and he was buried in his hometown of Norwich at Sacred Heart Cemetery just a few hundred yards from his home.

Since the accident a fund has been set up by Larry's parents, The Larry Pontbriant Athletic Safety Fund, to raise money to buy and distribute AEDs to high schools and local athletic events across the state. AEDs are automated external defibrillators that work the same as the defibrillators that the EMTs carry only they are more portable. They can help to return the heart beat to normal or even restart the heart if needed. Unfortunately, despite raising enough money to buy several of the AEDs there have been some road blocks. Connecticut legislature has no law stating that an AED must be present at sporting events. While many schools have an AED, they are locked up in the nurse's office. If an athlete collapses at a sporting event a few hundred yards or even farther from the school, too much time will elapse by the time the AED arrives. The AED also must be clearly marked and visible with a trained personnel there ready to use if need be.

I am asking you to support House **Bill 5812, An Act Concerning the Availability of Automatic External Defibrillators for Public Use**. Cardiac Arrest can happen to anybody and is much more common than you may realize. While many parents may think that their children are safe out there competing, without an AED the athletes aren't as safe as we would hope. The goal of the athletic safety fund right now is to get around the red tape and get the AEDs out to the fields. We also would like remove the liability from all- even untrained- AED operators, from prescribing physicians, from organizations which have received AEDs, and from athletic sites. In addition, if the subject of funding prevents the passage of this legislature, then we want to keep AED laws and funding separate.

I would like to thank you in advance for taking the time to consider this bill and for voting in support of it. The goal of the Larry Pontbriant Athletic Safety Fund isn't to bring attention to what we, as a community, have been through, but hopefully to prevent this from happening in the future and to save another athlete's life. Once again thank you for any help that you may be able to offer

Sincerely,

Conor Clendennin
Quaker Hill, CT