



Sudden Cardiac Arrest Association

POWER AND PASSION... SAVING LIVES

**Statement of the Sudden Cardiac Arrest Association
submitted to the Connecticut State Senate Committee on Public Health
in support of SB 981 to require Automatic External Defibrillators
(AEDs), training and development of emergency action plans to respond
to sudden cardiac arrest events on school grounds**

Honorable Chair and members of the Committee:

The Sudden Cardiac Arrest Association (SCAA) commends the introduction of SB 981 and applauds the Committee for holding this hearing to collect testimony as it considers and hopefully recommends enactment of this legislation.

Sudden cardiac arrest (SCA) is the nation's leading cause of death. It results from the abrupt loss of blood flow due to an electrical disruption of the heart's that limits its ability to pump blood and carry oxygen to the other vital organs. SCA kills nearly 300,000 Americans each year. Without immediate CPR and the shock of an automatic external defibrillator (AED) in less than ten minutes to restore the heart's natural rhythm, 95 percent of victims die of SCA. In most cases, waiting for emergency medical services (EMS) to arrive to assist the victim is too late.

Risk factors for SCA include congenital and genetic conditions, as well as a previous heart attack, diabetes, coronary artery disease, obesity and smoking. There are likely members of the Senate and even this committee that meet the risk factors profile. SCA can strike people of all ages, including children and teenagers.

AEDs are commonplace in many public facilities, such as airlines and airports, federal office buildings, and many shopping malls, health clubs and golf courses. More than 20 states have enacted legislation to require AEDs at school facilities, as well as the implementation of training and emergency response plans. We strongly urge Connecticut to join that growing list. There is ample evidence that CPR and AEDs save lives, and AEDs on school campuses have multiple benefits. They not only improve emergency response to assist students who suffer a sudden cardiac arrest – they also are available to help protect teachers, staff, parents and visitors. AEDs should be located in public facilities where people work and play, and school campuses are major community centers and gathering spots. It is important to stress that this is not only a student safety issue – it is a workplace safety issue for teachers, coaches, sports officials and other adults who work on school campuses and who carry risk factors for SCA.

Furthermore, by implementing school-based AED programs, you will be helping to educate the broader community of students, parents, teachers and staff about sudden cardiac arrest and emergency response. While training and management of AEDs are important overall components of implementing a school-based program, the technology of AEDs does not require training in order for them to be successfully deployed. AEDs

are simple to devices with voice-prompted directions that allow even an elementary school student to use them. One of the issues we face in utilizing AEDs is that many bystanders do not know what they are or are afraid to use them. By making them commonplace, and introducing them in our schools, we are educating and preparing multiple generations about the importance of bystanders responding to someone's collapse from sudden cardiac arrest.

Even in this age of constrained budgets, we do not believe that the implementation of a statewide AED program is a financial burden. SB 981 as written provides multiple ways for local school districts to secure AEDs and training. In addition, this is ultimately a question of priorities. Parents, teachers, students and administrators can easily come together to find ways to fund the purchase of these devices. And leveraging the symbolism of an AED program to have a broader community discussion about heart disease and SCA risk factors provides an additional public health benefit that will hopefully reduce the overall risk factors and improve the cardiac health of the citizens of Connecticut.

The Sudden Cardiac Arrest Association is the nation's leading public advocacy organization exclusively dedicated to preventing sudden cardiac death through better public awareness, better emergency response, and better access to health care for patients at risk. Our recently published "Saving Lives in Schools and Sports" booklet is attached to this testimony, and we encourage the committee to make the document a part of the record. It is also a valuable educational tool for any individual or organization that might not support enactment of SB 981.

Thank you.

Submitted by Sherri Hopkins, Chair Connecticut Sudden Cardiac Arrest Association
and Chris Chiames, Executive Director
Sudden Cardiac Arrest Association
For more information, please visit www.suddencardiacarrest.org