

To the Members of the Committee on Education:

My name is Evelyn Pontbriant from Norwich, CT. My husband Larry and I strongly support Raised Bill No. 5349, Including CPR and AED Training in the Public School Curriculum.

Our son, Larry Pontbriant, was an energetic, loving and intelligent 15 year old who loved his family, friends and sports, especially lacrosse. A three-sport athlete himself, one of his best athletic assets was his fine conditioning which he accomplished through distance running. Larry collapsed right in front of us, his parents, and his friends during a community three mile fun run at Mohegan Park in his hometown of Norwich, Connecticut, on August 16th, 2007, from a Sudden Cardiac Arrest (SCA). He had no known medical problems. 911 was called and CPR begun. No on-site AED was available. When the ambulance arrived on scene, his heart was in ventricular fibrillation—just quivering—so EMTs used their Automated External Defibrillator or AED to shock Larry's heart to return to a more normal rhythm, which it did. He was eventually transported to Connecticut Children's Medical Center in Hartford where he died three days later. Tragically, too much time had elapsed between Larry's collapse and the shock from the AED.

Tests could not determine why Larry's heart had gone into ventricular fibrillation--there are many causes of death from SCA in young athletes; unfortunately, many are found only at autopsy. What ultimately led to Larry's death was lack of sufficient oxygen to the brain, causing it to swell. Once the brain begins to swell, the process does not stop, snuffing out blood flow to the brain, causing brain damage, brain death and, ultimately, death. We found out at the Medical Center that even under the best conditions, effective CPR can be only 25% efficient at pumping enough blood to the brain in SCA; the body needs the strong pump of the heart to accomplish that. The shock from an AED can get the heart to resume more normal pumping, thereby reversing an SCA, but this must be done soon after a collapse because with every passing minute, the chances of survival decrease by 10%. Since brain damage from lack of oxygen can occur in as little as 4 to 6 minutes and ambulance arrival times can vary due to location of victim, traffic, poor directions, panic, etc., having an on-site AED made the most sense to us. Consequently, The Larry Pontbriant Athletic Safety Fund was formed.

The goal of Larry's Fund has been to raise awareness about Sudden Cardiac Arrest, encourage training in CPR and the use of an AED, and to raise funds for the purchase of AEDs for schools and athletic fields in Eastern Connecticut. Schools were a great place to start because they are not only education centers for our youth but can be community centers and shelters as well. Through the Fund, around 75 AEDs have been placed so far. But if the devices are in place and nobody knows how to use them, or are afraid to use them, or can't perform effective CPR, or aren't educated in the consequences of not performing CPR or using an AED, what have we accomplished? We know that our youth, our students, are quick to learn and technologically savvy. What better age group then is there to teach CPR and AED skills to? Please support Raised Bill No.5349. Thank You.

Evelyn and Larry Pontbriant, Norwich, CT

