



March 5, 2012

Testimony of Vicky Graham, Connecticut Athletic Trainers' Association

In Support of Raised Bill 5349 at a Public Hearing before the Education Committee

“AAC the Inclusion of CPR and AED Training in the Public School Curriculum”

Good morning Senator Stillman, Representative Fleischmann, and honorable members of the Education Committee. On behalf of the Connecticut Athletic Trainers' Association (CATA), I would like to thank you for your attention to the issue of educating students to be first responders in the event of sudden cardiac arrest, and am here to testify in support of Raised Bill 5349.

The CATA has been a strong advocate for AED-related legislation, including Public Act 09-94, which requires schools in Connecticut to have at least one AED readily accessible both during and after the school day. A natural step forward would be to educate students in CPR and AED use, so that there are more trained responders available both in the school and in the community. It would be a superb lesson in the importance of these simple life-saving activities, as well as fostering a sense of the individual's responsibility to fellow citizens and the community. There are numerous stories of small children who can barely speak saving a parent's life by dialing 9-1-1 because they had been taught to do so. There are many similar stories of a parent, teacher, grandparent or stranger being saved by a teenager who performed CPR at home or used a public access AED in an airport.

Because of our role in providing medical care to athletes, the CATA is acutely aware of the incidence of sudden cardiac arrest in physically active, apparently healthy populations; however, it is important to understand that sudden cardiac arrest can strike anyone, at any time. Sudden cardiac arrest is not the same thing as a heart attack. It results from an electrical disturbance in the heart that causes the heart to go into an abnormal rhythm (ventricular fibrillation) and cease to function. This can occur to infants, young children, teenagers, college students, and adults of all ages and physical conditions. The grim statistics include the fact that approximately only 5% of victims of sudden cardiac arrest survive. This is due in no small part to the fact that most people do not receive defibrillation within 3 to 5 minutes.

The first three of the American Heart Association's five links in the “Chain of Survival” involve the first responder (1) recognizing a problem and calling 9-1-1, (2) starting CPR, and (3) applying the AED. All of these things are taught in both the American Heart Association and American Red Cross courses in CPR and AED.



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We recognize that mandating courses outside of the core curriculum is sometimes unpopular with educators, often for good reason. A CPR/AED course from either the American Heart Association or the American Red Cross can easily be added into current school health courses, and takes only several days of instruction to complete. The addition of a required module of CPR/AED instruction into an existing course should not significantly or negatively impact the delivery of the health course curriculum, and in fact, would enhance it tremendously.

On behalf of the Connecticut Athletic Trainers' Association, I strongly urge you to support Raised Bill 5349, "AAC the Inclusion of CPR and AED Training in the Public School Curriculum."

Vicky Graham, ATC

President, Connecticut Athletic Trainers' Association

[vicky.graham@ctathletictrainers.org](mailto:vicky.graham@ctathletictrainers.org)

860/685-3980