



**American
Red Cross**

Testimony –HB 6503, AAC Public School Pool Safety

I am pleased to offer testimony on behalf of the American Red Cross in support of HB 6503, An Act Concerning Public School Pool Safety.

The American Red Cross supports legislation that would help to increase safety at Public School Pools, especially in light of the recent deaths that have occurred in school swimming programs. The Red Cross believes that individuals trained and certified in American Red Cross Lifeguard Training or the equivalent certification are a vital component of a safe pool plan. Drowning can usually be attributed to what is known as the RID Factor (Pia, Frank. “The RID Factor in Drowning,” June, 1984, *Parks and Recreation*, 52.-67). RID is an acronym for Recognition, Intrusion and Distraction and is part of the Red Cross Lifeguarding curriculum.

Recognition- The person supervising the individuals in the water may fail to recognize a person who is exhibiting drowning behavior. Lifeguards are trained to recognize drowning behavior.

Intrusion- The primary purpose of a lifeguard is to supervise swimmers. All other duties are secondary. Teachers have many duties while conducting a class. They need to take attendance, teach skills and deal with other general class management issues. These duties may intrude on their supervision of swimmers.

Distraction- Teachers may become distracted due to class management issues. Besides teaching, educators need to deal with many tasks and requests, including students needing passes to go to the nurse and/or bathroom and communicating with administrators. These duties may distract them from watching swimmers. When water is involved, this can become especially hazardous. If a teacher were to become distracted teaching soccer, a student having an issue could just sit down on the field. In a swimming class, the results could be tragic.

The American Red Cross believes that having individuals trained and certified as Lifeguards, which includes training in First Aid and CPR/AED skills, can increase the safety of operations at public school pools. We also recommend that a lifeguard, whose sole responsibility is patron surveillance, is present during swimming classes and aquatic events. These recommendations will greatly reduce the likelihood of further accidents and deaths occurring.

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