

February 7, 2013

My name is Fred Balicki; I live in Manchester Ct. I am speaking today in support of developing the "Proposed Bill No. 5113 – An Act Concerning Pool Safety at Public Schools" as introduced by Rep. Stephen D. Dargan, 115th District.

I have been working at the Indian Valley Family YMCA in Ellington Ct. as a Lifeguard for the past two years. I am a retired Ct. State employee, having worked at the departments of Developmental Services (DDS) and Public Health. My previous job at DDS was Quality Review Specialist Supervisor, a role that I performed for twenty one years.

I strongly encourage the Public Safety and Security Committee to establish a state wide policy and standards for public school pool safety that promotes vigilance and protections for swimmers by including the following seven recommendations in the new policy:

1. Have Lifeguards certified in Red Cross Lifeguarding, First Aid, CPR (cardiopulmonary resuscitation) and AED (automated electronic defibrillator) on duty during all aquatic activities. That includes recreational swimming, swimming lessons and other aquatics lessons, competitive swim team practice and meets and other water sport activities. Identify minimum lifeguard to swimmer ratios.
2. Have a Red Cross certified Water Safety Instructor on staff at each public school to supervise the implementation of pool safety policies and procedures, provide professional direction and in-service training to lifeguards, supervise lifeguards' scanning practice and maintain necessary rescue and emergency equipment.
3. An Aquatic Emergency Procedure/Action Plan is ready to operate in each public school swimming pool that includes lifeguard rescue and emergency assistance activities, 911 notification, and specified support and administrative staff notification to provide immediate assistance, emergency management and incident reporting.
4. Each public school pool has available for immediate use the necessary aquatic rescue and emergency equipment that is maintained in complete working order, such as: lifeguard rescue tubes, whistles, reaching pole, shepherd's crook, ring buoy, backboard with head immobilizer, first aid supplies, personal protection equipment, infection control supplies, breathing barriers, resuscitation masks, oxygen equipment, AED, and an emergency on call system.
5. Each public school pool has a standard swim testing procedure implemented to identify and manage swimmers of differing abilities and ages, particularly non-swimmers. Restrict non-swimmers to water no deeper than mid-chest level. Have non-swimmers participate in a "buddy system" with swimmers or wear a Coast Guard approved PFD (personal flotation device).
6. Each school district has an Aquatic Risk Management and Quality Self Assessment program that is continuously implemented and summarized annually for compliance verification and quality improvement activity. Reports are made available to a state monitoring agency and the public.
7. Designate a State agency for the independent monitoring of public school swimming pools, policies, procedures and aquatic activities to include: compliance verification, achievement recognition and deficiency identification, requiring plans of correction and to impose appropriate penalties for non-compliance.

Additionally, I hope that this committee succeeds in amending Title 10 of the Ct. general statutes with a holistic new policy that ,as much as humanly possible, protects swimmers in public school pools from injury or the loss of life.

Respectfully submitted,

Fred Balicki