

TESTIMONY OF  
Michelle L. Dyer, CNA

Public Health Committee  
March 15, 2013

***Testimony in support of S.B. 61 AN ACT CONCERNING THE ADMINISTRATION OF  
EPINEPHRINE TO CHILDREN IN SCHOOLS***

Dear Senator Gerratana, Representative Johnson, and esteemed members of the Public Health Committee:

My name is Michelle Dyer, and I am a certified nurse assistant as well as a student with aspirations to become a pediatric nurse practitioner. I am writing in support of S.B. 61. The passing of this bill could make a difference in saving a child's life during a life-threatening allergic reaction known as anaphylaxis. Anaphylaxis is a systemic allergic reaction that can kill within minutes due to asphyxiation or extremely low blood pressure. To prevent death, anaphylaxis must be treated promptly with an injection of epinephrine.

Due to epinephrine's vasoconstrictive effects, it is preferable in counteracting the symptoms of anaphylaxis. In fact, it is recommended by NIH-NAID Food Allergy Guidelines as the first-line of treatment in all cases of anaphylaxis.<sup>1</sup> Epinephrine has minimal side effects and can be easily administered by an auto-injector which is a pre-measured, spring-loaded pen-sized device designed for easy use by non-medical persons.

Food is the most common trigger for anaphylaxis and accounts for approximately half of all reported cases each year.<sup>2</sup> According to recent studies:

- One in 13 children suffer from some type of food allergy, and for 40% of those children, their allergies can be life threatening.<sup>3</sup>
- Food allergies account for 300,000 hospital visits by children each year.<sup>4</sup>
- 25% of first time anaphylactic reactions occur among children at school.<sup>5</sup>
- Anaphylaxis results in 1,500 deaths per year.<sup>6</sup>

Schools must be equipped to treat allergic reactions in the event of the following:

1. Administration of an epinephrine auto-injector to a student with a known allergy by a school nurse without a physician's order.
2. Self-administration of an epinephrine auto-injector by a student with a known allergy who has forgotten his/her auto-injector.
3. Administration of an epinephrine auto-injector to a student, with an unknown allergy, having a first-time anaphylactic reaction.

According to Food Allergy Research & Education (FARE), twelve states have already passed such legislation and project that by the end of 2013 the number of states to pass this law will double or triple.<sup>7</sup>

In January 2012, seven-year-old Ammaria Johnson of Virginia died from cardiac arrest while she was at school due to complications from anaphylaxis after she unknowingly ingested a peanut. She was not administered epinephrine. Schools **MUST BE PREPARED** to treat emergency allergic reactions like Ammaria's.

If this bill does not get passed it will be another year or more until school clinics are appropriately equipped with life-saving drugs. Again, the passing of this bill could make the difference in saving a child's life. Therefore, I urge the committee to support S.B. 61.

Sincerely,

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## References

<sup>1</sup> Boyce JA, Assa'ad A, Burks AW, et al. Guidelines for the diagnosis and management of food allergy in the United States: report of the NIAID-sponsored Expert Panel. *J Allergy Clin Immunol*. 2010

<sup>2</sup> "Anaphylaxis Overview." ACAAI <http://www.acaai.org/allergist/allergies/Anaphalxis>. Accessed on March 5, 2013.

<sup>3</sup> Gupta et al, "The Prevalence, Severity and Distribution of Food Allergy in the United States," *Pediatrics*, June 20, 2011.

<sup>4</sup> Gupta et al, "The Prevalence, Severity and Distribution of Food Allergy in the United States," *Pediatrics*, June 20, 2011.

<sup>5</sup> Sicherer et al, "Clinical Report – Management of Food Allergy in the School Setting," *Pediatrics*, December 1, 2012.

<sup>6</sup> Clark S. Camargo CA Jr. Epidemiology of anaphylaxis. *Immune Allergy North Am*. 2007

<sup>7</sup> "School Access to Epinephrine." FARE <http://www.foodallergy.org/advocacy/school-access-to-epinephrine>. Accessed on March 5, 2013.