



**Education Committee**  
**Public Hearing – March 7, 2016**  
**SB 378 AAC The Recommendations Of The High School**  
**Graduation Requirements Task Force**  
**Jim Williams, Government Relations Director**  
**American Heart Association**

I would like to thank the Co-Chairs Senator Slossberg and Representative Fleischman, Ranking Members Senator Boucher and Representative Lavielle, and the Committee for providing me with the opportunity to comment in **opposition** to SB 378, on behalf of the American Heart Association. The American Heart/Stroke Association (AHA) is the largest voluntary health organization in the world who is working to build healthier lives, free of cardiovascular disease and stroke.

SB 378 attempts to delete “one half credit in health and safety education” as described in section 10-16b of the CT General Statutes (lines 38-43 of this bill). This attempt completely undermines the important work that passed just last year in this very committee that requires public schools to include CPR training as part of their existing health and safety curriculum. This legislation passed and is currently captured in PA 15-94 the provisions for which are set to begin with the 2016-2017 school year. The PA requires that the CPR instruction be based on American Heart Association guidelines for emergency cardiovascular care, including hands-on training in CPR. The Act also allows local or regional boards of education to accept gifts, grants, and donations (including in-kind donations) to purchase equipment or materials needed to provide the instruction.

Over 326,000 people have cardiac arrest outside of a hospital every year, and only 11% survive, most likely because they don't receive timely CPR.<sup>1</sup> Given right away, CPR doubles or triples survival rates.<sup>1</sup> Teaching students CPR could save thousands of lives by filling our community with lifesavers – those trained to give sudden cardiac arrest victims the immediate help they need to survive until EMTs arrive. Sudden cardiac arrest can happen any place, at any time. If you suffer sudden cardiac arrest, your best chance at survival is receiving bystander CPR until EMTs arrive. But most do not. That's a reality that has to change. Teaching students CPR before they graduate would put thousands of qualified lifesavers on our streets every year. Many people are alive today because individuals trained in CPR – including youth and adults who received training in school – stepped in and gave CPR until EMTs arrived. We need to create a generation in which every brother, sister, son, daughter, friend, and complete stranger is trained in CPR and is prepared to save lives.

One likely reason that the High School Graduation Task Force would like to delete this requirement is the potential fiscal impact, which in the current budget times might be understandable. The Office of Fiscal

Analysis did attach a fiscal note to the bill which stated that a new subject “could result in a cost of up to \$5,000 per district, in FY 16, associated with researching and developing the necessary materials, and providing training to appropriate staff members, for a total of up to \$15,000 per district.”

Costs can in fact vary depending on the type of training utilized but **estimates show that the per-student cost approximately \$1.00**. In fact, some schools have been able to provide training at no cost using community volunteer instructors or video-based programs, donated equipment, and drawing support from businesses, foundations, civic organizations and public agencies. The amount of time required to offer effective CPR training takes less than the amount of time to watch a typical 30 minute TV sitcom.<sup>1</sup>

CT is certainly not alone in requiring CPR in the public school curriculum. In fact there are currently 27 states with similar legislation as CT’s including: Alabama; Arkansas; Delaware; Georgia; Idaho; Illinois; Indiana; Iowa; Louisiana; Maryland; Nevada; New Jersey; North Carolina; Oklahoma; Rhode Island; Tennessee; Texas; Utah; Vermont; Virginia; Washington; West Virginia; and Wisconsin. As of January 6, 2016 the following states have had similar legislation introduced: Hawaii; Kentucky; Michigan; New York; Ohio; Oregon; Pennsylvania; and South Carolina.<sup>2</sup>

SB 378 also attempts to delete such electives as nutrition and physical education (also in lines 38-43). Connecticut now faces an obesity crisis that impacts citizens of all ages. Our states youth, in particular, are being negatively impacted by the crisis. The 2013 CT Department of Public Health Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS) showed that 13.9% of students were classified as overweight (defined as a body mass index (BMI) at or above the 85th percentile up to the 95th percentile<sup>3</sup>) and 12.3% were classified as obese (defined as a BMI at or above the 95th percentile<sup>4</sup>).<sup>5</sup> There also exists a large disparity, in terms of obesity rates, between white students and Black and Hispanic/Latino students. 18.1% of Black students and 18.9% of Hispanic/Latino students were categorized as obese compared to 9.8% of white students in the YRBS.<sup>6</sup> Obese children are at least twice as likely as non-obese children to become obese adults.<sup>7</sup>

The evidence is also clear that the obesity crisis is affecting all age groups in our state. In the 2013 Centers For Disease Control and Prevention’s Behavioral Factor Surveillance Survey (BRFSS), 37.6% of adults were classified as overweight (defined as a BMI between 25.0-29.9) and 25% were classified as obese (defined as a BMI of 30.0 or above).<sup>8</sup> The prevalence of overweight and obesity in Connecticut is a significant public health issue. Excess weight is associated with chronic diseases such as heart disease and type 2 diabetes.<sup>9</sup>

To conclude, while in the middle of a statewide obesity crisis it makes no sense to deemphasize the value of nutrition and physical education in the public school curriculum. Neither does it make sense not to require that a generation of kids learn the necessary skills necessary to become lifesavers in their communities. We respectfully request that the committee reject SB 378.

Sincerely,

Jim Williams  
State Government Relations Director  
American Heart Association

<sup>1</sup>American Heart Association. “Hands Only CPR Fact Sheet.” Accessed at [http://cpr.heart.org/idc/groups/heart-public/@wcm/@ecc/documents/downloadable/ucm\\_473563.pdf](http://cpr.heart.org/idc/groups/heart-public/@wcm/@ecc/documents/downloadable/ucm_473563.pdf) on 3/5/2016.

<sup>2</sup>schoolcpr.com. “States where CPR Training is Mandatory for High School Graduation.” Accessed at <http://schoolcpr.com/about/states-where-cpr-training-is-mandatory-for-high-school-graduation/> on March 4, 2016.

<sup>3</sup> Pediatrics Vol. 120 No. Supplement 4 December 1, 2007 pp S164-S19, <http://musckids.org/heart/health/physician%20resources/aap%20summary.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> Pediatrics Vol. 120 No. Supplement 4 December 1, 2007 pp S164-S19, <http://musckids.org/heart/health/physician%20resources/aap%20summary.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> CT Department of Public Health (2014). 2013 Youth Risk Behavior Survey Results CT High School Survey Summary Tables. Retrieved from: [http://dph/lib/dph/hisr/pdf/yrbs2013ct\\_summary\\_tables.pdf](http://dph/lib/dph/hisr/pdf/yrbs2013ct_summary_tables.pdf)

<sup>6</sup> CT Department of Public Health (2014). 2013 Youth Risk Behavior Survey Results CT High School Survey Summary Tables. Retrieved from: [http://dph/lib/dph/hisr/pdf/yrbs2013ct\\_summary\\_tables.pdf](http://dph/lib/dph/hisr/pdf/yrbs2013ct_summary_tables.pdf)

<sup>7</sup> U.S. National Library of Medicine: National Institutes of Health. “Do obese children become obese adults?” Accessed at <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/8483856> on 3/24/2016.

<sup>8</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Office of Surveillance, Epidemiology, and Laboratory Services. Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System. <http://apps.nccd.cdc.gov/brfss/display.asp?cat=OB&yr=2013&qkey=8261&state=CT>.

<sup>9</sup> Connecticut Department of Public Health. April, 2014. Live Healthy Connecticut, A Coordinated Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion Plan. Hartford, CT: Connecticut Department of Public Health. <http://www.ct.gov/dph/cwp/view.asp?a=3137&Q=543772>