

Dear Appropriations Committee Members,

Please accept this as my written testimony requesting the inclusion of \$150,000 in the FY2026 budget to provide a grant program for Vermont schools most in need of resources to help implement cardiac emergency response plans.

Despite 200 schools in Vermont having AEDs, the state's cardiac survival rate is 7.5% compared to the national average of 10.2%. This disparity can be overcome with simple action steps that involve increasing resources, such as implementing cardiac emergency response plans for lay-responders. This is critical, as most Vermonters live in rural areas where EMS response times are longer than average. The proposed funding will give the opportunity for purchasing more AEDs and certifying individuals at Vermont schools in CPR.

It is our responsibility to protect the individuals at our schools, and CPR training can easily prevent fatalities in these communities. The safety of students, staff, and visitors can be enhanced by having a coordinated, existing, emergency action plan, especially for those participating at a sporting event, as 40% of cardiac arrests occur during sports participation.

Thank you for your time and consideration,

Aislinn O'Connor

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