

Dear Appropriations Committee Members,

I am writing to request the inclusion of \$150,000 in the FY2026 budget to establish a grant program aimed at helping Vermont schools implement cardiac emergency response plans. While over 200 schools in Vermont are equipped with AEDs, the state's cardiac arrest survival rate remains among the lowest in the nation at just 7.5%. Additional resources are critical to improving these outcomes. Providing funding for AEDs, CPR training, and supporting trained lay responders—especially in rural areas where EMS response times are slower—could significantly enhance survival rates.

Research has shown that implementing a cardiac emergency response plan can more than double survival rates for individuals experiencing cardiac arrest. Whether it is a student, athlete, coach, or visitor, anyone who suffers a cardiac arrest in a Vermont school would benefit immensely if trained responders are ready to act quickly, ensuring the best chance of survival until emergency services arrive. It is particularly alarming to know that over 23,000 children under the age of 18 experience cardiac arrests outside of a hospital each year, with 40% of these cases being sports-related.

I know firsthand how important it is to respond quickly in cardiac emergencies. As a medical student, I have studied the significance of early intervention, but my passion for this issue comes from personal experience. My uncle, who was like a father to me, passed away in my arms after suffering a massive heart attack. This tragedy underscored the importance of rapid response in these situations, especially since the first few minutes following a cardiac event are critical. Factors like stress, diet, and genetics all contribute to cardiac health, and by investing in cardiac emergency plans in our schools, we can save lives and significantly improve the health outcomes of our communities.

In the last ten years, 24 cardiac arrests have occurred in Vermont schools, including the case of 16-year-old Dominic Barcomb, who survived thanks to Spaulding High School's cardiac emergency plan, training, and quick response by staff and coaches. Dominic's life was saved because the school was prepared, and it is imperative that we ensure all Vermont schools have the same level of readiness. Please consider helping all Vermont schools by providing the necessary resources to prepare for cardiac emergencies. This small investment could make all the difference and potentially save many lives.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Francisco Cordero

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