



Date: February 19, 2025

To: Chair Black and members of the House Health Care Committee

From: Tina Zuk, Government Relations Director, American Heart Association

Testimony: Funding for Implementation of Cardiac Emergency Response Plans

The survival rate for out-of-hospital cardiac arrest is only 10.2% nationally. That's abysmal. But, in Vermont, it's even worse. Only 7.5% of victims survive.

That means more than 92% of victims die.

One of the reasons survival rates are so low is because only about 40% of people who suffer a cardiac arrest get the immediate help they need before emergency responders arrive.

Vermont's rate is likely lower because of our rural nature and the time it may take for even the best emergency responders to arrive.

We're working to pass legislation ensuring that schools and sporting events have cardiac emergency response plans. Plans like these can more than double survival rates by enabling a trained lay-responder team to take action.

The plans create an emergency team that is CPR trained, have AEDs well-placed and publicly accessible, make sure the devices are maintained, the plan is practiced with a drill and the team integrates with EMS.

While our research has shown that 211 schools in Vermont have AEDs, not all do. And only 84 schools responded to our survey that they had cardiac emergency response plans.

We are asking for your committee's support today for our budget request of \$150,000 to create grant program for Vermont schools most in need of resources to help implement cardiac emergency response plans.

This funding will help ensure that there are trained lay-responders, especially in rural areas, where EMS response times may be challenged. It could be used for AEDs and CPR training.

The funding amount is based on an estimate of what it would cost to provide AEDs and CPR training to a quarter of Vermont's Title 1 Schools. Since many schools have AEDs,

we wanted to take an incremental approach and allow schools that have greater needs for these resources to get assistance.

Why schools? Cardiac arrests do happen at Vermont schools – 24 in the last ten years. And 40% of the cardiac arrests that happen to youth under 18 are sports related.

It makes sense to be prepared because emergencies will happen. Sometimes because of a blow to the chest like what happened to Buffalo Bills star Damar Hamlin.

But they may also happen due to an undiagnosed heart condition like what happened to 16 year-old Milton sophomore Dominic Barcomb who collapsed from a cardiac arrest just minutes into the basketball game against Spaulding High School on January 3rd.

Dominic is literally living proof of the power of these cardiac emergency response plans. Spaulding's athletic trainer and two coaches got their AED, performed CPR and saved his life.

Please take 3 minutes to hear his story:

[Dominic Barcomb's Story -- Bigger than Basketball](#)

It may not always be a youth that needs help. It could be a parent, coach or official, and has been. All these lives are worth the investment to ensure schools are prepared.

Please support our request for \$150,000 to help schools prepare for cardiac emergencies. It's a modest investment and could literally mean the difference between life and death.