



SMART HEART SPORTS COALITION

June 12, 2024

The Honorable Bernie Sanders
Chairman
Committee on Health, Education, Labor
and Pensions
U.S. Senate
332 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Bill Cassidy, M.D.
Ranking Member
Committee on Health, Education, Labor
and Pensions
U.S. Senate
332 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairman Sanders and Ranking Member Cassidy:

On behalf of the Smart Heart Sports Coalition, we write in strong support of the Access to AEDs Act (S. 1024), pending before your committee. This life-saving bill enjoys broad, bipartisan support in the Senate, with sixteen cosponsors from both sides of the aisle. We urge the committee to pass it as soon as possible.

A House companion bill was included in the Cardiomyopathy Health Education, Awareness, Research, and Training in Schools Act or HEARTS Act (H.R. 6829), which the House Committee on Energy and Commerce passed unanimously in March. It is now poised to be considered on the House floor. Both measures (S. 1024/H.R. 6829) would help to make our school communities safer and more resilient by better preparing them to respond to sudden cardiac arrests when they occur.

Launched in March of 2023, the Smart Heart Sports Coalition is comprised of leading health advocacy groups, as well as major sports organizations. We have come together for a nationwide advocacy campaign to raise awareness and drive adoption of policies proven to prevent fatalities from sudden cardiac arrest (SCA) among young people.

Each year, more than 356,000 cardiac arrests occur outside of a hospital in the United States. Unfortunately, only about ten percent of victims will survive this traumatic event. Cardiac arrest is a life-threatening emergency that can strike any time and any place, including in classrooms and at school-sponsored sporting events. As many as 23,000 children experience cardiac arrest outside of a hospital each year, and 40% happen when kids are participating in athletics. It is the leading cause of death for student athletes.

Fortunately, survival from cardiac arrest increases significantly when cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) and, if necessary, an automated external defibrillator (AED) are administered promptly to a victim. However, lack of access to AEDs and CPR intervention contribute to the high rate of sudden cardiac deaths. Currently, only about half of the states in the country, plus the District of Columbia, require AEDs to be placed in schools, and even fewer require them in school athletic venues. All schools should have multiple AEDs that can be accessed and used on a cardiac arrest victim within minutes. That is why we urge the Senate to pass the Access to AEDs Act.

This legislation authorizes a federal grant program that would increase the availability of AEDs and related equipment on elementary and secondary school campuses. The program also would support CPR education and training among students, school personnel, coaches, and volunteers. Moreover, it would support the development of Cardiac Emergency Response Plans, which along with AEDs and CPR, are integral to a coordinated, immediate, and effective response in the crucial minutes between the time when a victim collapses and when emergency medical services arrive. Simply put, the program would help to provide schools across the country with the tools and know how necessary to respond to cardiac emergencies and save lives.

We, therefore, urge you to support the Access to AEDs Act, which will help to strengthen school communities, and create a nation of lifesavers. Thank you in advance for your consideration.

Sincerely,

American College of Cardiologists
American College of Sports Medicine
American Heart Association
American Medical Society for Sports Medicine
American Orthopaedic Society for Sports Medicine
American Red Cross
Association of Black Cardiologists
Chasing M's Foundation
Citizen CPR Foundation
Heart Rhythm Society
John Taylor Babbitt Foundation
Korey Stringer Institute
Major League Baseball
Major League Soccer
Make Them Know Your Name Foundation
National Academy of Sports Medicine
National Athletic Trainers' Association
National Association of Emergency Medical Technicians
National Basketball Association
National Collegiate Athletic Association
National Council of Youth Sports
National Federation of State High School Associations
National Football League
National Football League Physicians Society
National Hockey League
National Women's Soccer League
Parent Heart Watch
Pediatric and Congenital Electrophysiology Society
Project ADAM
Simon's Heart
Sport Safety International
Starting Hearts
Sudden Cardiac Arrest Foundation
T.J. Carrie Foundation
United States Tennis Association
Weil Institute (The Weil Institute for Critical Care Research)
Who We Play For
Women's National Basketball Association
Women's Tennis Association