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To: House Committee on Education
From: Kaitlyn Bennett BSN, RN, CPN
Date: January 17, 2024
Re: Oral Proponent Testimony on HB 2494

Dear Chair Thomas, Vice Chair Estes, Ranking Minority Member Stogsdill, and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide additional information and testimony in support of HB 2494, specifically focusing on the cardiac emergency response plan component. Having cardiac emergency response plans (CERPs) enable schools to offer any person who may experience a sudden cardiac arrest (SCA) the best chance of survival. On any given day, approximately 20 percent of the US adult and child population can be found in schools working or learning. This includes students, teachers and staff, visitors, and family members. A focused effort on cardiac arrest preparedness in schools is critical to protect our children and others in the community. When a SCA occurs, every second counts; we know that survival rates decrease by 10 percent with each minute of delayed defibrillation. The national average for the time it takes emergency medical services (EMS) to arrive at the site of an emergency is 8-12 minutes. If CPR is not performed and an Automatic External Defibrillator (AED) is not retrieved and used in those 8-12 minutes before emergency medical services arrives, the chance of survival is less than 10 percent.

I spent the first decade of my career as a nurse at Children's Mercy taking care of cardiac patients in the hospital setting. When I found myself alone in a critical situation with a patient, I would pull the call light out of the wall alerting my colleagues that I needed help. Within seconds I would have 10 people in the room, all ready to jump in and help where needed. A school nurse deserves that same kind of support, but her resources are significantly different. School nurses don't have a call light with other medical professionals at the ready, which is why having a response team, and a cardiac emergency plan in place is critical. By practicing this plan with mock scenarios on a regular basis, nurses and school staff can be prepared to save a life.

I now have the privilege of working out in our community as a Project ADAM coordinator. Project ADAM is a national community outreach program that is dedicated to saving lives by empowering schools and communities to be prepared for a SCA. We help schools create "Heart Safe" environments by having designated response teams, implementing cardiac emergency response plans and conducting sudden cardiac arrest drills to practice their response skills. I help provide them with tools, education, support, and resources they need to ensure that their campus is equipped to provide immediate response to someone suffering a cardiac emergency. The first district in the state of Kansas to become "Heart Safe" was Spring Hill Schools. Emporia Public Schools are currently working through the program, with plans to designate as a Project ADAM Heart Safe School District in April 2024.

Project ADAM was launched 25 years ago after the death of 17-year-old Adam Lemel in January 1999. He suffered a cardiac arrest at his school campus but did not receive the immediate response needed to save his life. A sudden cardiac arrest is exactly as the name states: sudden – unexpected and often no warning signs. SCA doesn't have to be a death sentence as it was for Adam. When members of our community are educated and receive prevention training, people can survive a SCA. NFL player Damar Hamlin and NCAA



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basketball player Bronny James both of whom suffered SCAs during athletic events were successfully saved because the people around them knew how to respond. Our Kansas communities deserve this same chance at survival.

When school cardiac emergency response teams are trained and empowered to administer lifesaving care until EMS arrive the safety of students, school staff, and school visitors, such as a grandma on grandparent day, or a father watching his daughter's volleyball game, are enhanced.

I ask you to support HB 2494 to ensure that all schools in Kansas have staff members enabled to save the life of someone experiencing a sudden cardiac arrest successfully and confidently. I hope you too will see the need for schools to have cardiac emergency response plans, accessible AEDs and appropriate training. Again, thank you for this opportunity and thank you for your work and continued dedication to the safety and well-being of our children and communities.

**Kaitlyn Bennett BSN, RN, CPN
Children's Mercy Kansas City**