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To: Senate Committee on Education
From: Kaitlyn Bennett, RN, BSN, CPN
Date: March 18, 2024
Re: Oral Proponent Testimony on Sub for HB 2494

Dear Chair Baumgardner, Vice Chair Erickson, Ranking Minority Member Sykes, and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide additional information and testimony in support of HB 2494, which would establish requirements for schools in Kansas to implement cardiac emergency response plans (CERPs). Having CERPs in place enables 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 and the national average for the time it takes emergency medical services (EMS) to arrive to 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 taking care of cardiac patients inside a hospital. As a nurse at Children's Mercy Hospital-Kansas City, when I found myself in a critical situation with a patient by myself, 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 they're needed. A school nurse deserves that same kind of support, but she often does not have the same resources at hand. By creating a response team and a plan, and practicing that plan with her team, the nurse can ensure that if a cardiac emergency were to occur at her school, she and her team are ready to save a life.

Now I have the privilege of working out in our community as the 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 are a free program that helps schools create a "Heart Safe" environment by having designated response teams and implementing CERPs. We provide them with the tools, education, support, and resources they need to ensure that their campus is prepared to provide an immediate response to someone suffering a cardiac emergency. Project ADAM was launched after the death of 17-year-old Adam Lemel in 1999 after he suffered a cardiac arrest at a school campus. He did not receive the immediate or appropriate response needed to save his life.



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A sudden cardiac arrest is exactly as the name states: sudden. They are unexpected and often there are no warning signs. But death from a SCA doesn't have to happen like it did for Adam. When people are educated and receive prevention training, people can survive a SCA, like NFL player Damar Hamlin and NCAA basketball player Bronny James did, both of whom suffered SCAs during athletic competitions.

Ensuring we have CERPS in place and the education to do so in our schools is imperative. These plans establish specific steps to reduce death from cardiac arrest in school settings. The safety of students, school staff, and school visitors, like a grandpa on grandparent day, or a father watching his daughter's volleyball game, can be enhanced when school cardiac emergency response teams are trained and empowered to administer lifesaving care until EMS arrive.

I strongly urge you to support Sub for HB 2494 to ensure that all schools in Kansas have staff members who can successfully and confidently save the life of someone experiencing a sudden cardiac arrest.

Thank you for your work and dedication to the safety and well-being of our children and communities.

Kaitlyn Bennett, BSN, RN, CPN

Children's Mercy Hospital-Kansas City