

Testimony in Support of HB 2529

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Thank you, Madam Chair and members of the committee,

My name is Dr. Joshua Vasquez. I am a pediatric physician training in Oregon and someone deeply committed to child health and community advocacy. I am speaking today in strong support of HB 2529, which would require Oregon schools to have Automated External Defibrillators (AED) and a formal plan for cardiac emergencies.

Sudden cardiac arrest is the leading cause of death in young athletes during exercise. One case that stands out to me, is that of a young girl admitted to our pediatric intensive care unit, after suffering a sudden cardiac arrest of unknown cause. There was no AED nearby. Although her parents performed CPR until the ambulance had arrived, she had to be placed on life support to help her breathe and given multiple medications to keep her heart functioning. Unfortunately, the damage to her brain had already occurred. An AED on-site could have saved her.

When an automated external defibrillator is used within the first few minutes, survival rates can exceed 70 percent. Without it, each minute that passes reduces the chance of survival by up to 10 percent. Sudden cardiac arrest is the #1 cause of death in young athletes during sports. Even one preventable death is too many. These are not just statistics. They are real children: sons and daughters, classmates and teammates, whose lives could be saved by quick action and the right tools.

What I appreciate about this bill is that it recognizes this reality and supports schools not only in obtaining automated external defibrillator but also in training staff and developing real emergency response systems. While some schools in Oregon have access to AEDs on their campus, many others do not. But I believe every child in Oregon deserves access to an AED in the setting of an emergency.

As a pediatrician, I have cared for many Oregon families navigating the unimaginable loss of a child. That kind of pain leaves a lasting impact. I invite you to consider what it would feel like to be in their place. If it were your child, would you want an AED close at hand? Would you hope that school staff were trained and prepared to respond with confidence? I believe every parent would.

By helping schools build readiness and ensure access to life-saving devices, HB 2529 gives every student a better chance. This is not just good policy. I believe it is an act of care and responsibility to the children and families of Oregon.

Thank you for your time and for your commitment to protecting young lives.

I appreciate your time,

Dr. Joshua A. Vasquez, MD

DATA:

1. Sudden cardiac death in athletes:

Citation: Harmon KG, Asif IM, Klossner D, Drezner JA. Incidence, cause, and comparative frequency of sudden cardiac death in NCAA athletes: a decade in review. *Circulation*. 2011;123(15):1594–1600. doi:10.1161/CIRCULATIONAHA.110.004622

Stat used: *“Sudden cardiac death is the leading cause of death in young athletes during exertion.”*

2. AED survival within first 3–5 minutes:

Citation: Weisfeldt ML, Sitlani CM, Ornato JP, et al. Survival after application of automatic external defibrillators before arrival of the emergency medical system: evaluation in the Resuscitation Outcomes Consortium population of 21 million. *J Am Coll Cardiol*. 2010;55(16):1713–1720. doi:10.1016/j.jacc.2009.11.077

Stat used: *“Shows survival >70% when AED is used within first 3–5 minutes.”*

3. Every minute delay reduces survival by 7–10%:

Citation: American Heart Association. CPR Facts and Stats. Updated January 2023. Accessed March 26, 2025. <https://cpr.heart.org/en/resources/cpr-facts-and-stats>

Stat used: *“Each minute of delayed defibrillation reduces survival by 7–10%.”*