

## **Testimony in Support of HB 4160**

Submitted by the Oregon School Employees Association (OSEA)

House Committee on Education

February 6, 2026

Chair Hudson, Vice Chairs McIntire and Dobson, and Members of the Committee,

For the record, my name is Cassidy Kotter, and I am a Government Relations Specialist with the Oregon School Employees Association (OSEA), which represents over 25,000 classified school employees across all 36 Oregon counties. On behalf of OSEA, we strongly urge your support for HB 4160. This critical legislation will ensure that every school in Oregon has a well-defined Cardiac Emergency Response Plan (CERP), including access to Automated External Defibrillators (AEDs) and appropriate training for staff.

As classified employees—bus drivers, office staff, instructional assistants, food service workers, custodians, and more—OSEA members are often the first to respond in medical emergencies. When a student, colleague, or community member suffers a sudden cardiac event, mere seconds matter. Having clear, standardized emergency plans, proper training, and accessible AEDs can mean the difference between life and death.

Sudden cardiac medical emergencies can happen to anyone, regardless of age or medical history. In fact, it happened to me. After suffering a heart attack in the fourth grade, I experienced two additional life-threatening cardiac events in the following decade, both of which required cardiac ablation procedures at Doernbecher Children's Hospital. The last time I came dangerously close to losing my life was at age 15, when I went into cardiac arrest during my high school aerobics physical education class.

I know firsthand how impactful having an easily accessible AED on campus would have been. I endured nearly an hour of severe cardiac distress while waiting to be transported by ambulance to Salem Hospital's Emergency Room. I was placed in a hospital room and administered an intravenous antiarrhythmic drug that failed to slow my heart rate, which remained above 200 beats per minute. Ultimately, the only intervention that successfully saved my life was an AED.

The full extent of the irreversible damage my heart sustained from such prolonged trauma remains uncertain. I often wonder how my circumstances could have been improved if my high school had been equipped with an easily accessible, on-campus AED and trained staff able to use it during that critical hour before medical professionals intervened. Research consistently shows that immediate access to AEDs and CPR significantly increases survival rates for individuals experiencing cardiac emergencies. Yet without a clear plan in place, too

many schools remain unprepared. HB 4160 ensures that every school—not just those with existing resources—has a life-saving strategy.

OSEA is deeply committed to advocating for the safety and well-being of both students and staff. We believe that having the resources to protect lives should not be optional. It should be a standard expectation in every school. And we aren't the only ones. In what feels like a very full-circle moment, I was encouraged to see that Dr. Seshadri Balaji, the very pediatric cardiologist and electrophysiologist that successfully performed both of my cardiac ablations at Dornbecher, has submitted written testimony in support of this bill to the record. HB 4160 is a commonsense, life-saving measure. We respectfully urge an aye vote on HB 4160.

Sincerely,

**Cassidy Kotter**

Government Relations Specialist

Oregon School Employees Association (OSEA)