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Reps. Cherfilus-McCormick, Posey, Sen. Booker Introduce Legislation to Increase Students' Access to AEDs

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Washington, D.C. – Reps. **Shelia Cherfilus-McCormick (D-FL)** and **Bill Posey (R-FL)** introduced the **Access to AEDs Act to promote students’ access to automated external defibrillators (AEDs) in schools.**

“Ensuring that the right tools and training are in place can save a life. The nation watched this unfold with Damar Hamlin of the Buffalo Bills on national television,” **stated Congresswoman Cherfilus-McCormick.** “As a mom and member of Congress, I’m on a mission to expand life-saving health care tools to school-aged children across the country by equipping elementary and secondary schools with AEDs and routine Cardiac Emergency Response training. AEDs were created to save lives, and that’s precisely what this bill aims to do—save our children’s lives when an emergency strikes,” **Congresswoman Cherfilus-McCormick concluded.**

Joined by special guests, Congresswoman Cherfilus-McCormick formally introduced the legislation at the Top of the Hill Banquet & Conference Center on March 29 at 12:00 p.m. ET. **View the livestream [here](#).**

“Sudden cardiac arrests can be experienced by anyone, including children. In fact, student athletes are more than 3.5 times likely to experience sudden cardiac arrest than non-athletes,” **said Senator Booker.** “They are often fatal if appropriate steps are not taken quickly. We can increase the survival rate from cardiac arrests if more schools, where our children learn and play, have access to AEDs. That is why I am proud to join my colleagues in introducing this bill that will ensure more schools carry this important tool to help save lives.”

The Access to AEDs Act is a bipartisan bill that directs the Secretary of Health and Human Services to award grants to elementary and secondary schools partnered with a nonprofit health care organization to develop and implement a comprehensive program to promote defibrillation access.

The grants can be used to:

- Purchase AEDs and their necessary batteries and maintenance.
- Replace old and outdated CPR and AED equipment, machinery, and educational materials.
- Provide CPR and AED training to students, staff, and related sports volunteers.
- Develop a Cardiac Emergency Response Plan.
- Assist schools’ athletic departments in developing heart screening programs for student athletes.
- Establish a clearinghouse database for the reporting of AED devices already in schools.
- Establish a clearinghouse database to gather information on SCA in the pediatric population for further research.

Currently, only 23 states have AED school requirements, with varying degrees of specificity regarding mandates on whether public schools, private schools, or both must have AEDs on campus and provide the necessary training on their use.

Access to AEDs Act Press Briefing by Congresswoman Sheila Cherfilus-Mc...



Sudden Cardiac Arrest (SCA) is a life-threatening emergency caused by a malfunction in the heart's electrical system or structure, caused by an abnormality from birth or one that develops over time. Annually, nearly 600,000 Americans suffer from SCA. More than 7,000 youth under the age of 18 suffer from SCA annually in the United States, with student athletes being more than 3.5 times as likely to experience SCA as non-athletes. Survival from SCA more than doubles when a bystander uses a publicly available AED as compared to waiting for an AED shock after the arrival of emergency responders.

"An estimated 350,000 people in the United States experience sudden cardiac arrest outside of the hospital each year, and 1 in 300 youth has an undetected heart condition that puts them at risk. Having community members trained in CPR, making AEDs available in schools, and encouraging schools to develop emergency response plans will make schools better prepared to respond to sudden cardiac arrest and save lives," **said Nancy Brown, CEO, American Heart Association.** "We greatly appreciate Reps. Cherfilus-McCormick and Posey for their work to prioritize heart health with the introduction of the Access to AEDs Act, which will promote access to defibrillation in elementary and secondary schools by supporting lifesaving training programs for students, staff and school volunteers."

"I'm very appreciative of the work that has been done to support the Access to AEDs Act and make people aware of how important it is to have AEDs in schools and have people trained in CPR," **said Damar Hamlin, who is focused on the development, health, and safety of youth through his charity, The Chasing M's Foundation Charitable Fund.** "The care I received saved my life. This legislation can help ensure that schools are just as prepared and trained to respond in a time of crisis as those on the sidelines of an NFL game. As my experience has shown us, CPR and access to AEDs will—without question—save lives."

"As we saw in the NFL, ensuring access to AEDs can be nothing short of lifesaving," **said Jeff Miller, NFL Executive Vice President of Communications, Public Affairs and Policy.** "We are pleased to support efforts to improve AED access, such as the Access to AEDs Act, and it is encouraging to see these initiatives taking hold across the country. The NFL this week pledged to

pass laws or regulations in all 50 states to ensure that AEDs are available, and coaches know CPR in every high school across America. We are committed to making that goal a reality. Student athletes deserve it.”

“The NHL is proud to be joining the NFL, the American Heart Association and others dedicated to the health and safety of young people in supporting Rep. Sheila Cherfilus-McCormick’s effort to pass the Access to AEDs Act,” **said Kim Davis, NHL Senior Executive Vice President of Social Impact, Growth Initiatives & Legislative Affairs.** “Our league knows first-hand the life-saving benefits of having immediate access to automated external defibrillators. This legislation would ensure that young people across the U.S. have that same essential protection in a moment of crisis.”

“Major League Baseball supports the Access to AEDs Act, which will promote AED programs in schools as well as the necessary training to ensure safe operation of these life-saving devices,” **said Jon Coyles, Vice President, MLB Drug Health & Safety Programs.** “It is our hope that passage of this legislation and other efforts will result in schools and youth sports across the country being provided with access to these life-saving measures.”

“The NCAA proudly supports the Access to AEDs Act of 2023 as part of its ongoing concern with the cardiac care of student-athletes,” **said Brian Hainline M.D., NCAA Senior Vice President and Chief Medical Officer.** “Automatic external defibrillation is a critical component of any athletic emergency action plan, and AEDs are highlighted in the NCAA’s interassociation guidance on the cardiac care of student-athletes and the prevention of catastrophic injury in collegiate student-athletes.”

“Sudden cardiac arrest can strike anyone, at any time, regardless of age or physical fitness,” **said Kim and Matthew Mangine Sr., Founders of the Matthew Mangine Jr. Foundation.** “With the availability of AEDs and proper training, the chances of survival increase dramatically. Too many high school athletes are dying needlessly in this country, and our goal is to prevent this from happening through education, proper training, and available AEDs.”

“The National Athletic Trainers’ Association fully supports Congresswoman Cherfilus-McCormick’s reintroduction of the Access to AEDs Act. This is critical legislation that would provide elementary and secondary schools with a comprehensive program to promote access to automated external defibrillators (AEDs). Recognizing the vital role of athletic trainers as first responders and a critical part of a school’s sports medicine team, they have the skill set to use AEDs, when necessary,” **said Kathy Dieringer, EdD, LAT, ATC, President of the National Athletic Trainers’ Association.** “With sudden cardiac arrest remaining the number one cause of death in young athletes, every second counts when it comes to catastrophic injury, and this Act ensures that best practices are in place.”

“Damar Hamlin’s sudden cardiac arrest earlier this year shocked our nation and demonstrated in no uncertain terms the importance of automated external defibrillators and an emergency action plan,” **said Richard Kovacs, MD, MACC, American College of Cardiology Chief Medical Officer.** “The Access to AEDs Act is critical legislation that will help elementary and secondary schools save lives by helping communities purchase and maintain AEDs, provide CPR and AED training and develop cardiac emergency response plans like the one used by the NFL to save Damar Hamlin’s life. Importantly, the legislation also includes ways to assist school athletic departments in developing heart screening programs for student athletes that are consistent with American College of Cardiology/American Heart Association guidelines. We look forward to our continued work with Rep. Cherfilus-McCormick to advance and pass this important legislation that will undoubtedly save lives in community across the United States.”

“Each year, nearly 600,000 Americans suffer sudden cardiac arrest, with a survivability rate of less than six percent outside of hospital settings. We have much work to do to train people in CPR and ensure that communities across the country have access to AEDs. This is particularly important where youth are participating in sports, given that young athletes are 3.5 times more likely to experience sudden cardiac arrest than non-athletes,” **said Gail McGovern, President and CEO of the American Red Cross.** “The American Red Cross is grateful to Congresswoman Cherfilus-McCormick for continuing to raise awareness of the importance of both access to AEDs and CPR training. Her Access to AEDs Act can help save countless lives across the country with vital equipment and training. We urge Congress to recognize the importance of this legislation and pass it quickly, to improve access to this equipment and training and to save lives.”

“The Who We Play For movement is honored to be a part of the team that introduced this life-saving Access to AEDs Act,” **said Shawn Sima, Impact Director for Who We Play For.** “Our teammate, Rafe Maccrone, lost his life on a Cocoa Beach High School soccer field in 2007 due to several missteps, but the key reason was that a defibrillator was not readily available. Who We Play For was started in his honor. Until we lost Rafe, like most, we did not know that Sudden Cardiac Arrest was the leading cause of death on school campuses and the leading cause of death for our athletes. Sadly, the survival percentage of this killer (10%) has statistically not improved in decades. Having a national law that focuses on CPR training and makes AEDs available to every school in the United States will save more lives than any other piece of legislation ever passed. Who We Play For wholeheartedly supports this law, and we pledge to work tirelessly to help it pass.”

“There are so few instances in life where major problems have an easy solution,” **said Darren Sudman, Founder of Simon’s Heart.** “This is one of them. Anyone, young or old, can learn how to push on the chest of someone in cardiac arrest to keep them alive. Similarly, anyone, young or old, can turn on an automated external defibrillator, follow the prompts, and deliver a lifesaving shock if needed. When these two things are available, lives will be saved. Period.”

“We know that we all believe that everyone deserves the same chance of survival as professional athletes. Unfortunately, that’s not the reality,” **said Hector Paredes and Rhina Paredes-Greenson, Co-Founders of the Eric Paredes Save A Life Foundation.** “Our family knows firsthand how life-altering it is to lose a child and then learn, after the fact, that there are preventable and life-saving measures that could have saved them. We need to do all we can to protect your children's hearts, whether they’re at school, practice, or an after-school activity.”

“School leaders know that being prepared is of utmost importance in emergency situations,” **said National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP) CEO Ronn Nozoe.** “That’s why NASSP wholeheartedly supports the Access to AEDs Act and its focus on funding emergency response planning, staff training, and partnerships with non-profit healthcare organizations. It’s imperative that our schools have the updated equipment and procedures they need to save lives.”

“Bystander use of CPR and AEDs are vital to the survival of those who suffer a cardiac emergency,” **said Andrea Baer, Executive Director of Parent Heart Watch.** “Providing empowerment and protection for individuals who witness the emergency to step in and act is applauded by Parent Heart Watch, whose vision is to eliminate preventable deaths from sudden cardiac arrest in youth by 2030. Publicly accessible AEDs and encouraging the use of them in an emergency will save lives.”

“Sudden cardiac arrest in youth is not rare,” **said Mike Papale, President & Founder of In A Heartbeat.** “When someone survives sudden cardiac arrest, it is not luck. Sudden cardiac arrest survival comes from being prepared. By placing more AEDs in schools along with emergency action plans, trained responders, and other resources, it will lead to more lives being saved.”

“Damar Hamlin is living proof of the paramount importance of AEDs, and we were honored to stand alongside his foundation, lawmakers and advocates to introduce this critical piece of legislation,” **said AJ Pace, Vice President of Global Marketing for Defibtech, a Connecticut manufacturer of automated external defibrillators (AEDs) and life-saving resuscitation equipment.** “The bill not only will put more equipment in schools, but also raise awareness about the need to have an emergency action plan in place. Sudden cardiac arrest can strike anyone, anywhere, at any time, and having the tools and training in place can make the difference between life and death.”

“The Sudden Cardiac Arrest Foundation is proud to endorse the Access to AEDs Act introduced by Congresswoman Sheila Cherfilus-McCormick,” **said Mary M. Newman, MS, President & CEO of the Sudden Cardiac Arrest Foundation.** “As a co-sponsor of the Call-Push-Shock movement, and co-author of the Cardiac Emergency Response Planning for Schools policy statement, we strongly advocate for grants to public and private schools to facilitate AED placement and cardiac emergency response plans. The average national survival rate from out-of-hospital cardiac arrest is 10 percent. With bystander CPR, survival rates increase to 30 percent. With bystander use of AEDs, survival rates increase to 50 percent. Enactment of this legislation will help save many lives.”

“As parents of Morgan Danielle Manning, who died suddenly at the age of 14 from sudden cardiac arrest, due to the rare heart condition called CPVT - Catecholaminergic Polymorphic Ventricular Tachycardia, we strongly endorse The Access to AEDs Act introduced by Congresswoman Sheila Cherfilus-McCormick,” **said Kerwin & Madelyn Manning, Founders of A Piece of My Heart Foundation.** “Our family immediately felt like a piece of our heart was missing when Morgan passed, yet we needed to turn this tragic heart-breaking experience into a way to make a difference in the lives of others. We established a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization called A Piece of My Heart

Foundation. Our mission is to promote awareness and support children and youth diagnosed with CPVT by providing funding for medical research, Automated External Defibrillators (AEDs), genetic testing and CPR training. We have made a significant impact by raising funds to provide AEDs to all of the Middle Schools in Pasadena Unified School District, Pasadena, California. Included with the AED devices were training for 10 school personnel, CPR training, and a 2-year maintenance agreement for each school. We believe that The Access to AEDs Act will change the grave outcomes of sudden cardiac arrest into hope-filled possibilities by offering a solution that will save thousands of lives.”

“Schools are at the heart of our communities and often serve as a center for public gatherings,” **said JoAnne Taylor Babbitt, Vice President and co-founder of the John Taylor Babbitt Foundation.** “The Access to AEDs Act will help address the current national health crises on school campuses through increased access to AEDs and CPR training.”

“Emergency preparedness is key to saving lives and having access to an AED in school communities makes sense,” **said Linda Mendonca, President of the National Association of School Nurses.**

The legislation is co-sponsored by Reps. Colin Allred (D-TX), Joyce Beatty (D-OH), Sanford Bishop (D-GA), Shontel Brown (D-OH), Tony Cárdenas (D-CA), Troy Carter (D-LA), Andre Carson (D-IN), Kathy Castor (D-FL), Judy Chu (D-CA), Yvette Clarke (D-NY), Jim Costa (D-CA), Jasmine Crockett (D-TX), Mark DeSaulnier (D-CA), Dwight Evans (D-PA), Adriano Espaillat (D-NY), Brian Fitzpatrick (R-PA), Al Green (D-TX), Raul Grijalva (D-AZ), Brian Higgins (D-NY), Eleanor Holmes Norton (D-DC), Jonathan Jackson (D-IL), Sheila Jackson Lee (D-TX), Sydney Kamlager-Dove (D-CA), Robin Kelly (D-IL), Greg Landsman (D-OH), Barbara Lee (D-CA), Summer Lee (D-PA), Stephen Lynch (D-MA), Doris Matsui (D-CA), Jim McGovern (D-MA), Betty McCollum (D-MN), Kweisi Mfume (D-MD), Nancy Pelosi (D-CA), Ayanna Pressley (D-MA), Dutch Ruppersberger (D-MD), Maria Salazar (R-FL), Adam Schiff (D-CA), Terri Sewell (D-AL), Darren Soto (D-FL), Marilyn Strickland (D-WA), Shri Thanedar (D-MI) Bennie Thompson (D-MS), Rashida Tlaib (D-MI), Jill Tokuda (D-HI), Susan Wild (D-PA), and Frederica Wilson (D-FL).

The legislation has been endorsed by the American Heart Association, the National Football League, Major League Baseball, the National Hockey League, the National Basketball Association, the Women’s National Basketball Association, the National Association for Stock Car Auto Racing, Major League Soccer, the National Collegiate Athletic Association, Who We Play For, the American College of Cardiology, American Red Cross, Parent Heart Watch, Simon’s Heart, Heart of the Game, Eric Paredes Save a Life Foundation, Youth Sports Safety Alliance/National Athletic Trainers’ Association, the National Alliance for Youth Sports, the American Federation of School Administrators, the National Association of State EMS Officials, the National Association of EMS Physicians, the Heart Rhythm Society, Defibtech, In A Heartbeat, the Sudden Cardiac Arrest Foundation, the John Taylor Babbitt Foundation, A Piece of My Heart Foundation, the National Association of School Nurses, and Every Second Counts, CPR.

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