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**ABC MISSION:**

*To promote the prevention and treatment of cardiovascular disease including stroke, in Blacks and other minorities and to achieve health equity for all through the elimination of disparities.*

September 12, 2023

The Honorable Rosemary Brown  
Senate Box 203040  
Harrisburg, PA 17120

Dear Senator Brown:

Because every second counts when someone experiences sudden cardiac arrest, the Association of Black Cardiologists (ABC) endorses SB 375 and applauds your leadership to ensure every school in Pennsylvania has a sudden cardiac arrest detailed emergency plan and an automated external defibrillator (AED) located within each school building, at all school sporting events and activities, as well as adequately trained personnel for the device and cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR).

The cardiac arrest that Buffalo Bills player Damar Hamlin suffered has led to a renewed appreciation of the importance of bystander CPR and AED training in all communities, including our nation's schools.

More than 356,000 out-of-hospital cardiac arrests (OHCAs) are reported annually in the United States, and an estimated 70 to 90 percent of people experiencing OHCA die before reaching the hospital.<sup>1</sup> CPR and use of an AED within minutes of OHCA can dramatically raise survival rates.<sup>2</sup> Survival and one-year outcomes after OHCA arrest were best when initial defibrillation with an AED was provided by bystanders, not paramedics.<sup>3</sup>

Requiring AEDs in school buildings, at sporting events and other public events, as well as requiring training in CPR and AED use, has the potential to make a difference in all communities, especially minority communities. Unfortunately, the relative likelihood of getting bystander CPR at home is 26 percent lower for Black and Hispanic people than for Whites, and the likelihood of bystander CPR for cardiac arrests in public is 37 percent lower for Blacks and Hispanics than for Whites.<sup>4</sup> However, state laws mandating CPR training in high schools is associated with a higher likelihood of bystander CPR for OHCA and this leads to improvements in outcomes following cardiac arrest.

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<sup>1</sup> Public Access Defibrillation (PAD) State Law Fact Sheet. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. [https://www.cdc.gov/dhds/policy\\_resources/pad\\_slfs.htm](https://www.cdc.gov/dhds/policy_resources/pad_slfs.htm). Accessed April 8, 2023.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Haskins B, Nehme Z, Andrew E, et al. One-year quality-of-life outcomes of cardiac arrest survivors by initial defibrillation provider. *Heart Published Online First*: 16 March 2023. doi: 10.1136/heartjnl-2021-320559

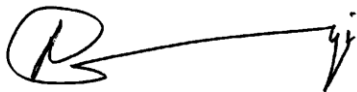
<sup>4</sup> Garcia RA, Spertus JA, Girotra S, et al. Racial and ethnic differences in bystander CPR for witnessed cardiac arrest. *N Engl J Med* 2022;387:1569-1578.

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A 2015 Institute of Medicine (IOM) report provided policy strategies for improving patient outcomes for cardiac arrest, which included requiring AED placement and CPR and AED training in schools.<sup>5</sup> More than seven years have passed since the IOM issued its recommendations, and, today, still less than half of all states have some type of AED school requirements. ABC applauds your efforts to ensure there will be a strong chain of survival in place if a student, student athlete, faculty or member of the public suffers sudden cardiac arrest on school premises or at a school sporting event or practice. We also commend language in your bill that would assist under-resourced Pennsylvania schools in acquiring AEDs.

The ABC and its members stand ready as a resource to you, and we commit our advocacy resources to passing this important legislation this year. For questions or more information, please contact Camille Bonta, ABC policy consultant, at [cbonta@summithealthconsulting.com](mailto:cbonta@summithealthconsulting.com) or (202) 320-3658.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'A. Onwuanyi', with a long horizontal line extending from the 'A' to the right.

Anekwe E. Onwuanyi, MD  
President  
Association of Black Cardiologists

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<sup>5</sup> IOM (Institute of Medicine). 2015. Strategies to improve cardiac arrest survival: A time to act. Washington, DC: The National Academies Press. <https://doi.org/10.17226/21723>.