

Hi everyone. Before I begin, I just want to note that I had my wisdom teeth removed a few days ago, so my face is a bit swollen and bruised.

With that said, my name is Claudia Leonard, and I am a senior at Barrington High School.

Over the past year, I have had the opportunity to help prepare Hampden Meadows Elementary School for a cardiac emergency. I helped organize a Cardiac Emergency Response Team of 19 staff members at Hampden Meadows. We trained them in CPR and AED use, developed clear emergency response protocols, and ran drills so staff would know exactly what to do if a student, teacher, or visitor suddenly collapsed.

What I learned through this process is that simply having an AED in a building is not enough.

Before the training, many teachers didn't even know where the AED was located. Without training and a clear plan, even the best equipment may not be used quickly enough in an emergency.

A Cardiac Emergency Response Team and plan ensures that staff know exactly what to do; who calls 911, who retrieves the AED, who begins CPR, and how the team works together until EMS arrives. Those first few minutes are critical for survival.

By the end of the training and drills, teachers told me they felt much more confident responding as a team in an emergency. That confidence can make all the difference.

At the same time, preparing a school for a cardiac emergency does not require extensive resources. If a high school student can help coordinate an effort like this using borrowed equipment and volunteer doctors, it shows that the barriers of cost and logistics can be quite low. What matters most is having a clear plan and ensuring staff are trained and ready to act.

Sudden cardiac arrest can happen to anyone, at any time. When it occurs outside of a hospital, about 90 percent of people do not survive. But immediate bystander CPR can double or even triple a person's chance of survival.

In those moments, the difference between life and death often depends on whether someone nearby is prepared to respond.

At Hampden Meadows alone, 19 staff members volunteered to join the emergency response team. Teachers clearly want to be ready to protect their students; they just need the structure, training, and support to do so.

The bills before you today would help ensure that every school has the planning and systems in place to respond quickly during a cardiac emergency. With the right preparation, those first few minutes can determine whether a life is saved.

Taking this step will help ensure that when an emergency happens, our schools are ready.

Thank you for your time and consideration.