



Dear Chairman and Esteemed Committee Members,

April 1, 2026

Support House Bill 7027 and Senate Bill 2079.

On behalf of the Rhode Island Certified School Nurse Association (RICSNA), we write to express our strong support for H7027 and S2079. These important pieces of legislation represent a critical step forward in strengthening cardiac emergency preparedness for all Rhode Island students, educators, and communities.

Sudden cardiac arrest (SCA) is a leading cause of death in young people and can occur without warning, even in seemingly healthy individuals. SCA events in school settings are relatively rare; however, they are life-threatening and unpredictable, so every second counts. According to the American Heart Association, "Preparation is key to survival from a sudden cardiac arrest due to the time-sensitive nature of treatment. With each minute delay in treatment, the chance of survival decreases by 10%" (AHA, 2023). On the contrary, when CPR is started and an AED is used within 3-5 minutes, survival can be as high as 41% to 74%, even with untrained responders (Drezner, et al.) These data points highlight the critical importance of immediate action, access to AEDs, and preparedness in school settings.

This legislation addresses both access and preparedness, ensuring that schools are equipped not only with life-saving tools, but also with the training and protocols necessary to use them effectively. While many schools currently have AEDs, access is not universal, and the presence of a device alone is not enough. Without clearly defined, practiced emergency protocols, critical time can be lost, which can mean the difference between life and death. This bill addresses both access and preparedness, creating a consistent and equitable standard of care across Rhode Island schools.

Beyond the data, this legislation is about peace of mind. Families trust that schools are safe environments for their children, during both the school day and extracurricular activities. Educators and staff rely on healthcare professionals to help ensure their safety as well. Visitors attending athletic events deserve the same level of preparedness and care. Ensuring consistent AED availability and structured response plans reinforces that trust and demonstrates a shared commitment to the well-being of our entire community.

We recognize that implementation requires thoughtful planning and collaboration. RICSNA stands ready to support schools and stakeholders in developing, training, and maintaining effective cardiac emergency response programs.

We respectfully urge your support for House Bill 7027 and Senate Bill 2079. Your leadership will help ensure that all Rhode Island schools are prepared to respond to cardiac emergencies and prevent avoidable tragedies.

Thank you for your time, consideration, and continued commitment to the health and safety of our school communities.

Sincerely,

Rhode Island Certified School Nurse Association

<https://ricsnta.nursingnetwork.com/>

American Heart Association. (2023). Cardiac Emergency Response Planning for Schools: Policy Statement.

<https://www.heart.org/-/media/Files/About-Us/Policy-Research/Policy-Positions/CPR-and-AED/Cardiac-Emergency-Planning-for-Schools.pdf>

Drezner, Jonathan A., et al. "Effectiveness of Emergency Response Planning for Sudden Cardiac Arrest in United States High Schools with Automated External Defibrillators." *Circulation*, vol. 120, no. 6, 11 Aug. 2009, pp. 518–525, <https://doi.org/10.1161/circulationaha.109.855890>.