

TESTIMONY

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S. 2855: Schools stocking self-administered asthma medication and epinephrine

Good afternoon, Senators, Members of the Health and Human Services Committee, and Chairwoman Murray. Thank you for letting me speak today. My name is Sierra Otilie-Kovelman, I live in East Greenwich, and I have severe asthma and allergies. I am strongly in favor of Bill 2855, Possession, stocking and administration of rescue medications for asthma or acute bronchospasm. I have had asthma since I was about 14 years old, asthma that was largely triggered by exercise in my younger years and now has many other triggers. As an adult, I have the ability to carry with myself my rescue medications - they go with me wherever I go. I will literally turn the car around halfway to driving somewhere should I realize my rescue inhaler is not with me. For people with asthma, the importance of our rescue inhalers cannot be understated. When I feel my asthma worsening, or an attack coming on, I feel my chest tighten - my airways become inflamed, the muscles around them constrict. I start to cough, more and more, sometimes coughing up mucus. My lips will turn blue, I'll taste blood. It is so important that when I feel these symptoms coming on, that I have immediate and easy access to my medication. Without my inhaler, these symptoms can and have spiraled out of control. When that happens, I need to go to the ER, get emergency breathing treatments, and harsh steroids to calm my reactive lungs. For children in school with asthma, having an attack can happen anywhere, anytime. Asthma is the most common chronic disease in children. Many cases of asthma are triggered by exercise like mine - recess, PE, or even just playing around in class can cause an asthma attack. I have gone to PE, was running laps participating on that day's assignment, noticed I wasn't breathing as well as I could have, but knew that going to the school nurse wouldn't help anything as they didn't have my medications. I would have to sit in that discomfort, struggling to breathe, distracted in class, until I got home later that day. As a gymnastics coach, I have athletes with asthma. They are able to bring in

their inhalers with them to practice and communicate when they need to use them, showing how this Bill already has feasibility in real life. Children are capable of knowing when they are feeling off and how to treat it, especially for those with chronic diseases. I have also had athletes forget to bring in their inhalers with them to practice - coming up to me while coaching, saying their throat is tightening up. Without their inhaler, they had to sit on the sidelines, bummed that they could not participate, physically unwell and uneasy. Me, the coach, worried for my athlete that I know has a medication that could be helping them in that moment, but they did not have access to. To not have timely access to a life-saving medication is a very scary circumstance to face, a situation children in K-12 education should not have to encounter. This Bill outlines all the necessary safety features around stocking asthma medications - outlining children who have do have diagnosed asthma, their medication, and doses. Most importantly, it gives children access to their medications they have at home - something we as adults often take for granted. Please vote in favor of Bill 2855 so that children in school with asthma can have access to their rescue medications. Thank you.