

February 25th, 2024

Testimony of Carron Laake

Favorable HB 1219 Public Schools - Cardiac Emergency Action Plan - Requirements

Good Afternoon Chair Atterbeary, Vice Chair Wilkins, and Honorable Members of the Ways and Means Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to speak. My name is Carron Laake and I am here today for my son Peter, in strong support of HB 1219 to protect our students and athletes.

Some say that we were lucky that afternoon of April 16, 2021, when our son Peter was playing lacrosse for his high school team, got hit in the heart by the ball causing him to go into cardiac arrest. Within seconds, he was face down on the field, lifeless. He had suffered what is called a Commotio Cordis, where his heart was struck by an object at a precise time causing his heart to stop. The fact that there were two doctors on the sidelines, several nurses in the stands, all who raced to his side, that was surely luck. However, the fact that he still is with us today with absolutely no damage to his heart or his brain, that was not luck, that was because his high school had a solid emergency response plan in place, which included our head athletic trainer having a working Automated External Defibrillator (AED) right next to him on the sideline. My son had roughly three minutes to be saved that day and after those three minutes, his chance of survival greatly diminished. An AED was the only way to restart his heart, CPR alone would not have done it. I can still vividly remember being at his side on the field and hearing someone say “we are losing him”. That feeling of fear and helplessness will never fade from my memory, as I watched my son turn blue and life fade from his body. My next memory is hearing one of the doctors shouted that he felt a pulse. With that, my son sat up as if nothing had happened to him and asked if he could go back into the game. It was a miracle for sure, but if there was no plan and we had to search for an AED, possibly in a locked building, the outcome that day would have been much different.

Tragically, just a month later and not far from my son’s school, another family experienced the devastating loss of their son when he had a cardiac emergency at school. Two cases close in time and proximity with two completely different outcomes. My heart ached at the time of my son’s injury at the mere thought of what could have been and my heart breaks for that other mother for the tragic loss of her son and whether there could have been a different outcome if there was a plan in place.

The importance of being prepared and the urgency of ensuring that every school is equipped with a Cardiac Emergency Response Plan cannot be ignored. Every student, every athlete deserves the same fighting chance of surviving a cardiac injury or incident as my son Peter had that afternoon of April 16th. I urge a favorable report on HB 1219.