



Wes Moore, Governor · Aruna Miller, Lt. Governor · Laura Herrera Scott, M.D., M.P.H., Secretary

February 28, 2024

The Honorable Vanessa E. Atterbeary
Chair, Ways and Means Committee
Room 131
House Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401-1991

RE: House Bill 1219 – Public Schools - Cardiac Emergency Action Plan - Requirements – Letter of Information

Dear Chair Atterbeary and Committee Members:

The Maryland Department of Health (Department) respectfully submits this letter of information for House Bill (HB) 1219 – Public Schools - Cardiac Emergency Action Plan - Requirements. HB 1219 requires each public school to develop and implement a cardiac emergency response plan beginning in the 2024-2025 school year.

Sudden cardiac arrest (SCA) is the sudden loss of heart activity due to an irregular heart rhythm. Early emergency treatment with cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) or an automated external defibrillator (AED) can help restart a stopped heart and allow return of a normal heartbeat to help prevent sudden cardiac death (SCD). Survival is possible with fast, appropriate medical care.

A sudden cardiac arrest in a school setting can be a traumatic event and have a devastating impact on the community, especially if it results in death. A 2018 report from the American Heart Association revealed that more than 356,000 out-of-hospital cardiac arrests occur annually; 347,422 in adults and 7,037 children under age 18.¹

In light of these statistics, it is important for schools to be prepared to respond quickly and appropriately to a person experiencing SCA or any other life threatening emergency. This can be accomplished through clear, concise, and evidence-based policies and procedures. Fortunately, Maryland public schools already have mechanisms in place that mirror the comprehensive cardiac emergency response plan (CERP) that HB 1219 proposes.

Maryland public schools must adhere to state laws requiring an Automated External Defibrillator (AED) program and venue-specific emergency action plans, as outlined in the Education Article, Annotated Code of Maryland §§7-425 and 7-451. These plans encompass AED operation, staff training, and trained staff presence at athletic events and school premises. Coaching staff must

¹Heart Disease and Stroke Statistics—2018 Update: A Report From the American Heart Association.
<https://www.ahajournals.org/doi/10.1161/CIR.0000000000000558>

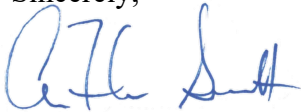
know and practice the emergency action plan. Additionally, COMAR 13a.05.05.09 and 13a.05.05.11 mandate first aid and CPR certification for at least one non-health services adult per school, along with on-site certified personnel during school hours and events, and placement of emergency care guides.

Further, local education agencies (LEAs) must implement an annual in-service training plan in first aid and CPR for school personnel. Guidelines for Emergency Care in Maryland Schools, developed by the Department and the State Department of Education, offer specific procedures for cardiac emergencies. Identification of staff able to respond to such emergencies is ensured through AED program maintenance and compliance with COMAR regulations.

HB 1219 raises the awareness and importance of the need for adequately trained staff and immediate response to those experiencing SCA. However, the legislation may be duplicative of existing practices.

If you would like to discuss this further, please do not hesitate to contact Sarah Case-Herron, Director of Governmental Affairs at sarah.case-herron@maryland.gov.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "L. Herrera Scott".

Laura Herrera Scott, MD, MPH
Secretary