



Statement of Maryland Rural Health Association (MRHA)

To the House Health Committee
Chair: Delegate Heather Bagnall
January 30, 2026

House Bill 0276: State Emergency Medical Services Board - Public Access Automated External Defibrillator Program - Revisions

POSITION: SUPPORT

Chair Bagnall, Vice Chair Cullison, and members of the Committee, the Maryland Rural Health Association (MRHA) is in SUPPORT of House Bill 0276: State Emergency Medical Services (EMS) Board - Public Access Automated External Defibrillator (AED) Program - Revisions.

The MRHA supports HB 0276, which expands Maryland's Public Access Automated External Defibrillator Program by establishing requirements for an AED coordinator and exempting certain law enforcement agencies from requirements for an AED certificate deployed in a patrol vehicle.

In comparison to urban communities, rural communities across the United States experience longer emergency response times, limited EMS resources, and decreased access to AEDs.¹ However, after out-of-hospital cardiac arrest in rural areas, use of an AED by a bystander has been shown to be strongly associated with survival outcomes. Additionally, targeted AED programs in rural communities have significantly improved survival after an out-of-hospital cardiac arrest.

Requiring entities to have a written plan for AED use and requiring an AED coordinator to maintain the functionality of each AED will ensure the efficacy of AEDs in the event of a sudden cardiac arrest.² Adding these requirements at the state level will standardize AED practices across organizations. Expanding access to AEDs and holding organizations accountable for them will save lives in Maryland, especially in rural communities.

MRHA believes this legislation is important to support our rural communities and we urge you to support its passage.

With appreciation,
The Maryland Rural Health Association

1. Grubic N, Peng YP, Walker M, Brooks SC. Bystander-initiated cardiopulmonary resuscitation and automated external defibrillator use after out-of-hospital cardiac arrest: Uncovering disparities in care and survival across the urban-rural spectrum. *Resuscitation*. 2022;175:150-158. <https://www.sciencedirect-com.proxy1.library.jhu.edu/science/article/pii/S0300957222001320>. doi: 10.1016/j.resuscitation.2022.04.014.
2. Who is qualified to perform inspections on AEDs? Code One Web site. <https://code1web.com/learning-center/who-is-qualified-to-perform-inspections-on-aeds/>. Accessed Jan 30, 2026.