



Testimony in Support of HB74 Lifesavers School Program

Dear Ways and Means Committee,

My name is Catherine Carter, and I am a Vision/Health Advocate who has worked for that last eight years to improving the health of our community and schools through active involvement in passing state and national legislation and policy. Today, I appear before you not only as an advocate but also as a concerned parent, urging your support for HB74, the Lifesavers School Program.

The Lifesavers Program aims to recognize schools that prioritize the mental wellness of their students and staff by implementing mental health and peer mentoring programs and providing CPR/First Aid training. Schools participating in the program will undergo renewal every four years. By equipping our students and staff with the skills to support and save each other, we can foster safer schools and communities.

But it is not enough to pass a bill. I am asking for you to use your powerful voice and platform to inform our communities, schools, parents, and students about this program. Encourage them to work together and empower each other to become Lifesavers, so tens of thousands of us across the state of Maryland have the skills to combat the mental health crisis in our communities.

I believe many of us present here have encountered the challenges of supporting loved ones dealing with depression and suicidal thoughts. Personally, I experienced a traumatic incident in high school when I had to rush someone I care about to the hospital after a suicide attempt. This heartbreaking experience left me feeling powerless, questioning if there was more I could have done, and burdened with self-blame. Today, our schools and communities grapple with a mental health crisis, and teachers and students are calling for resources to address the pressing need to prevent suicides. HB74 offers schools the resources, motivation, and recognition to implement Mental Health Wellness and peer mentorship programs.

Furthermore, the Lifesavers Bill acknowledges schools that provide crucial first aid training to students and staff, empowering them with the skills needed in emergency situations. My daughter had two emergency incidents at her middle school, highlighting the urgency of such training. In these instances, students were scared and unsure how to help their peers until someone certified in first aid arrived. It took six minutes before proper assistance was provided, demonstrating the critical need for broader first aid education.

After these incidents, I discovered that my teenagers lacked essential First Aid knowledge beyond basic CPR, as their health class was limited by curriculum constraints. Investigating options, I found that the Red Cross offers a First Aid Program allowing teachers and administrators to receive training and, in turn, can train their students. Participation in the Lifesavers First Aid Program can apply towards staff professional development and student community service hours.

Many students will inevitably face emergency situations, such as parties with friends experiencing alcohol or drug-related issues, or peers struggling with mental health challenges. Students are often the first on the scene, and the Lifesaver Program recognizes them as an untapped resource that, with proper skills, can assist and save lives.

In conclusion, I implore the Ways and Means Committee to support HB74 and the Lifesavers School Program. By doing so, we can empower our schools and communities to proactively address mental health challenges and equip our students with life-saving skills, creating a safer and more resilient environment for our communities. Thank you for your attention and consideration.

American Red Cross First Aid/CPR/AED

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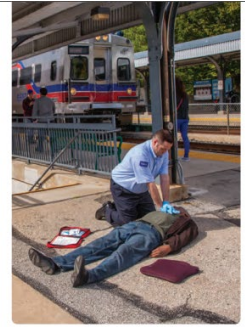
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.01 Comprehensive Health Education Instructional Programs for Grades Prekindergarten—12.

(3) Safety and Violence Prevention.

(a) High school students shall complete instruction in cardiopulmonary resuscitation that includes hands-only cardiopulmonary resuscitation and the use of an automated external defibrillator.