

Thank you for the opportunity to speak today. My name is Justin Benoit. I'm a physician from the University of Cincinnati, and I'm before you today as the Chairman of the Ohio Cardiac Arrest Registry to Enhance Survival (Ohio CARES).

Damar Hamlin of the Buffalo Bills "died" on national TV on January 2nd from a sudden cardiac arrest. Ten minutes later, he was revived by my colleagues in Cincinnati thanks, in large part, to Ohio CARES. Damar Hamlin's collapse may have shocked the nation, but it is not a rare event. Sudden cardiac arrest occurs to 30 Ohio citizens every single day, and unlike Damar Hamlin, only 10% survive. The goal of Ohio CARES is to bring the medical care Damar Hamlin received on the field that day to all of Ohio.

Sudden cardiac arrest has many causes, but the event is the same. Without warning, a person collapses to the ground. Perhaps they were playing a friendly game of basketball, listening to a sermon in church, eating dinner with their family at a restaurant, or watching their daughter perform in the high school musical. In one sudden devastating moment, they are ripped away from their loved ones. Their lungs have stopped breathing. Their heart has stopped beating. This person has essentially died, right then and there. It happens to both adults and kids; the sick and the healthy. It could happen to literally anyone in this room, right now.

But there's hope. A witness recognizes it as a sudden cardiac arrest and starts CPR. Someone else locates an AED. A third person dials 9-1-1. Paramedics and police respond quickly to aid in the resuscitation. An IV is started. Medications are administered. The heart restarts. The person is rushed to the hospital where they are treated by nurses, physicians, respiratory technicians, and pharmacists. Four days later, the patient wakes up, surrounded by family. A life is saved.

This is the American Heart Association's "Chain of Survival." If one link breaks, the person dies. It's just that simple. So how do we ensure that every link is strong? The answer is Ohio CARES.

Ohio CARES collects and analyzes the public, EMS, and hospital response to sudden cardiac arrest. We then confidentially feed this information back to teach organizations how to improve based on their specific needs. Ohio CARES currently covers 46% of the population of Ohio, which we achieved

on a shoestring budget from intermittent donations. Yet our work has only just begun. We want to expand Ohio CARES to 100% of Ohio. To achieve this, we need to establish connections with 800 additional EMS agencies and hospitals in the state, disproportionately located in suburban and rural areas.

We are requesting that Ohio CARES be added to the state operating budget. A \$300,000 annual budget would enable us to (A) hire three part-time paramedic coordinators to enroll organizations, (B) hire one full-time statistician to analyze data, (C) hire one full-time director for Ohio CARES, (D) support the software costs for Ohio CARES, and (E) teach our “Resuscitation Academies” across the state to increase rates of bystander CPR and decrease disparities in medical care.

I may be biased, but to me, funding Ohio CARES is a “no-brainer.” Consider the tax revenue lost because of a sudden cardiac arrest. I’m not talking about the effect the sudden loss of income has on a family. That number is much bigger. I’m just talking about the loss in tax revenue. Ohio only needs to save 14 additional lives, out of 10,000 annually, to pay for Ohio CARES, and I believe the return on investment will be much greater.

In addition, Ohio CARES directly supports related efforts by the State of Ohio, such as the AED and telecommunicator CPR bills currently being discussed, since Ohio CARES is the only way to know if these lifesaving interventions are occurring, or not.

To be clear, I don’t get paid to be here. I’m here because I care. I’m here because without your help, Ohio CARES will cease to exist. The benefits we provide to Ohio will be lost. Donations can get us no further. We need you to care. We need the State of Ohio to care. With your support, we can ensure that Damar Hamlin is the rule, not the exception, for sudden cardiac arrest in Ohio. Please support Ohio CARES. Thank you.