

Hello Chairman Steve Huffman, Vice Chair Johnson, Ranking Minority Member Antonio, thank you for having me. My name is Nicole Ward. I serve as the Executive Director of the Make Them Know Your Name heart health foundation and I am the proud mother of two sons: my oldest, PJ Ward, and my youngest, Denzel Ward, who is a Cleveland Browns pro bowler and starting cornerback.

I stand here not just as a voice, but as a mother and now a widow, whose family, like countless others, has suffered a devastating loss—one inflicted by the assailant known as Sudden Cardiac Arrest (SCA). This condition preys on lives unexpectedly at all ages, even our youth, robbing them of their potential, dreams, and futures.

On May 2, 2016, my family and I experienced first-hand the unimaginable pain and loss caused by SCA when my late husband, the father of my sons, collapsed during a spin class at a local fitness center. Despite being surrounded by people, the absence of immediate CPR or the use of an AED, merely 32 steps away, dwindled his chances of survival with every passing minute waiting on EMS. Perhaps no one on site was equipped, trained, or prepared to act, and coupled with the crucial delay in EMS arrival, my husband's fate was sealed—a delay that could have been prevented by legislation if it had been in place.

Since that tragic day, my sons and I, working alongside heart health partners, have spearheaded the Make Them Know Your Name heart health foundation. We've witnessed and learned of countless preventable deaths due to the lack of education, training, resources, and preparedness—an intolerable reality demanding change.

HB47 represents a beacon of hope—a chance to mandate AED placement in crucial locations such as our schools, sports arenas, and recreation centers. It aims to establish emergency preparedness plans and ensure everyone is equipped with CPR and AED skills. This bill isn't just legislation; it's a lifeline for our communities, families, and children.

I implore you to take swift, decisive action in support of HB47. Backing this bill will prevent other families, perhaps even your own, from enduring the agony we've faced and continue to deal with to this day. AEDs and CPR knowledge aren't luxuries; they're necessities bridging the gap between life and death.

Heart disease remains the leading cause of mortality in the United States, with half of cardiovascular deaths associated with SCA. The statistics tell us it's not a matter of if it will affect you, someone you know, or someone you love, but when.

Your vote and support in favor of HB47 signifies lives saved, futures preserved, and the transformation of preventable tragedies into stories of intervention and hope.

With deepest gratitude for your consideration, I humbly submit

Nicole Ward