

House Bill #47 -- Require automated external defibrillators (AEDs) in schools

Senate Committee Meeting Testimony

Testimony from Jon Sprunger -- Teacher and Soccer Coach,
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Good morning and thank you for allowing me the opportunity to testify in front of this honorable institution. As a social studies teacher, this is an amazing experience for me. One that I will utilize in my classroom.

My name is Jon Sprunger and I am in my 34th year of teaching and coaching soccer for the Worthington School District in Worthington, Ohio. I would like to share with you my recent experience as to why House Bill 47 is so important as a lifesaving piece of legislation.

On the morning of July 7, 2023, I went through a life altering sudden cardiac arrest incident with one of my soccer players. An incident that I had trained for, but never thought I would ever use. I am so happy to share with you today, that thanks to our school's Emergency Plan of Action, my CPR and Lindsay's Law training (both of which are coaching requirements mandated by the OHSAA), and with an available AED, we are blessed to have beaten the odds and Canen Dickman is here with us today, as a healthy young man, with no physical or cognitive disabilities. Why did I use the phrase, "beaten the odds?" Well, I assumed through my trainings that if a Sudden Cardiac Arrest incident takes place, I as the coach, would respond in the method laid out in the trainings and this would save a life. Simple, right? Just follow the directions, and all will go well. What I didn't know at the time of our incident is that the "out of hospital survival rate" for sudden cardiac arrest is less than 10%. (The American Heart Association has it at 9.1%, JAMA lists it as 7.7%, and the Red Cross states just 4%). This percentages drop even further for those discharged from the hospital with no apparent dysfunctions. However, The Red Cross states that when CPR is given and an AED is administered, the survival rate jumps to over 50%.

The young athlete in this incident was Canen Dickman, and he is here with us this morning. On July 7, the soccer team was conditioning on the track prior to moving to the field for skill work. Canen had finished the first half of the workout without any difficulties. In the final conditioning circuit, I saw Canen pull out from the pack and start walking down the track. At first, I didn't think much about it. He could be tired, sore, exhausted, maybe even lightheaded. Or, as my veteran experience was initially telling me, he was simply a young teenager, who climbed out of bed 30 minutes prior to coming to the school, and probably hadn't eaten or drank anything prior to the mornings practice. Yet, I kept my eye on him as he walked in my direction.

Within a few seconds, his walk turned to a wobble, and then I saw Canen collapse. The way he fell that morning was of immediate concern. I have seen athletes faint before, and they tend to stumble before they fall. Canen literally just collapsed; in a way that I had never seen before. It was as if the essence of who Canen was as a person just instantaneously shut off and his body crumbled to the ground, face first, in a lifeless ball.

What I am about to share next will clearly demonstrate the lifesaving reasons why House bill 47 is significant and that is...the importance of time, training and an accessible AED! The school security cameras gave us a precise timeline of events from the time Canen fell to the time the paramedics arrived. The time was approximately 8 minutes. The longest 8 minutes of my life.

From the footage, one can see that I was kneeling at Canen's side in less than 10 seconds. What I initially assessed as a fainting, quickly shifted to what I thought was a seizure. With the help of my assistant coach Patrick Fagan, we rolled Canen over onto his back and called 911. As I was monitoring his vitals, Canen was unresponsive, his body was stiff, and he was grasping for breath. In the span of about 30 seconds, Canen's pulse became weaker and weaker until I could no longer find it. At this point I began CPR and rescue breathing, while Coach Fagan turned the 911 call over to a senior athlete and ran to the school for the AED. I administered 4 rounds of CPR and rescue breaths until Coach Fagan returned with the AED, unpacked it, and prepared its use. As I continued CPR, the AED measured Canen's vitals and advised a shock be administered. This shock from the AED restored Canen's heartbeat although it was still irregular and faint. The shock from the AED was given 4 minutes and 30 seconds from the time Canen collapsed. The paramedics arrived approximately 2 minutes later and thankfully took over. Thank goodness!

The good news in this story is that Worthington City Schools and the OHSAA put me in a position to save Canen's life. Worthington Schools mandates we have an Emergency Plan of Action. This plan has been discussed, formally written, and is reviewed on an annual basis prior to the start of the fall sports season. OSHAA has mandated that every coach (paid or voluntary) receive Sudden Cardiac Arrest Training (Lindsay's Law) every year and must complete CPR training, including AED use, every other year. But most fortunately for Canen, Worthington Schools had 4 AEDs on Kilbourne's property this summer, one of which was 100 yards from the spot where Canen fell. Kilbourne now has 5 AEDs. The 5th one has been installed outdoors in the stadium because of this incident.

I am just one part of the "chain of survival" as termed by the American Heart Association. I feel very blessed that I was able to act as a surrogate to keep Canen's heart circulating oxygen to his brain during these critical minutes. I am even more thankful for the quick access to the AED.

It is my belief that if Worthington City schools had not voluntarily invested in AEDs, Canen Dickman would not be here today. Period. My sincere wish is that House Bill 47 will be enacted, and future Sudden Cardiac Arrest patients will be saved and able to return to their lives with no lasting dysfunctions.

Thank you.

Citations

Berger, Stuart. (2017). *Survival from out-of-hospital cardiac arrest: Are we beginning to see ...*
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