

# Education Committee

## JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

**Bill No.:** SB-1350

AN ACT CONCERNING THE AVAILABILITY OF AUTOMATED EXTERNAL  
DEFIBRILLATORS AND REQUIRING CARDIAC EMERGENCY RESPONSE

**Title:** PLANS IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS.

**Vote Date:** 3/12/2025

**Vote Action:** Joint Favorable Substitute Change of Reference to Appropriations

**PH Date:** 2/26/2025

**File No.:**

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### SPONSORS OF BILL:

Education Committee

### REASONS FOR BILL:

This bill requires the State Department of Education (SDE) to establish a grant program by January 1, 2026, to assist school boards with the costs of implementing cardiac emergency response plans. This includes funding for the purchase, maintenance, and training related to Automatic External Defibrillators (AEDs). The program will prioritize grants for schools identified as high priority, with other grants awarded on a first-come, first-served basis. An appropriation of \$521,000 for the program is allocated for FY 26. This bill is crucial for enhancing the safety of students and staff in public schools by ensuring that schools are equipped with life-saving AED devices and that they have effective plans in place for responding to cardiac emergencies. By supporting schools with funding for training and equipment, the bill aims to increase the chances of survival during sudden cardiac events, which can happen unexpectedly.

### SUBSTITUTE LANGUAGE:

Substitute language removes the requirement for a cardiac emergency response plan.

### RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:

[Charlene Russell-Tucker, Commissioner, Connecticut State Department of Education](#): The Department stated that while it supports the intent of the bill, “additional resources would be required to establish and administer this new grant program,” and that “the funds

appropriated, and are not included in the Governor's budget." They also emphasized their willingness to collaborate with the committee and General Assembly moving forward.

## **NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:**

[Jim Williams, Connecticut Government Relations Director, American Heart Association:](#)

testified in strong support of SB 1350, which would strengthen cardiac emergency response plans (CERPs) in schools and allocate \$521,000 for high-need districts. He also proposed an amendment to expand the bill's scope. He emphasized that "a CERP can increase survival rates from cardiac arrest by 50% or more" and outlined key components like AED placement, CPR/AED training, EMS integration, and regular reviews. Citing recent cardiac arrests in Connecticut schools, he argued, "These plans save lives... the costs of implementation are far less than not being prepared." He urged the committee to adopt the amendment and fully support the bill, highlighting its life-saving impact and the need for equitable access to resources.

[Glenn Lungarini, Executive Director, The Connecticut Association of Schools:](#) testified in strong support of HB 1350, which expands AED availability and mandates Cardiac Emergency Response Plans in public schools. He emphasized that "the protection and safety of students, athletes, educators, and school personnel is a top priority" and highlighted CAS-CIAC's experience in supplying AEDs and providing cardiac safety guidance to schools. Lungarini offered CAS-CIAC's partnership in implementing the bill and administering grants, stating that the legislation is "a necessary step in enhancing emergency preparedness in school communities across Connecticut."

[Tony Perugini, Connecticut Association of Boards of Education:](#) They expressed conditional support for SB 1350, stating they "could support [the bill] if resources are available to purchase and maintain equipment." While acknowledging that many districts already incorporate medical emergencies into school safety plans, CABE emphasized the need for grant funding to help schools—especially those with aging equipment—effectively implement and sustain Cardiac Emergency Response Plans and AED readiness.

[Nicole Klarides-Ditra, Representative, Connecticut General Assembly:](#) testified in support of SB 1350, emphasizing the importance of clear, well-funded emergency response plans for cardiac incidents in schools. Drawing from firsthand experience, Rep. Klarides-Ditra stressed that "every second matters" and highlighted the need for adequate equipment, training, and coordination. She noted that "not all schools have the resources they need to properly respond to these emergencies" and urged the committee to support the bill to ensure every school is prepared to protect student health.

[Cheyenne Beach, Pediatric Cardiologist & Associate Professor, Yale University School of Medicine:](#) testified in strong support of SB 1350, as both a physician and a parent, she highlighted the life-saving impact of timely AED use: "For each minute that AED use is delayed, survival chances decrease by 7–10%." She cited survival rates of 80% with school AEDs versus 50% with EMS alone. Dr. Beach shared a personal account where a 14-year-old was revived thanks to immediate AED and CPR use, stressing the preventable tragedies of inaction: "Can you imagine getting a call that the AED was locked in a nurse's office and couldn't be used to save your child?" She urged the committee to pass the bill and fund its implementation, noting many districts still lack CERPs.

[Liam Boutot](#): testified in strong support of SB 1350, sharing his personal story of surviving cardiac arrest at age 21 thanks to his younger brother's CPR training. "He quickly instructed someone to call 911 and began chest compressions... this went on for well over 10 minutes before paramedics arrived with an AED." She emphasized the life-saving power of early intervention and the urgent need for accessible AEDs and school-based CPR training: "Doubling or tripling the odds of surviving a cardiac arrest isn't something I think you can put a price on." He urged the committee to pass the bill and provide funding for cardiac emergency response plans and AED access in schools.

[Christine Carver, Superintendent of Schools, Bethel Public Schools](#): The testimony expresses a neutral position on SB 1350, noting that while they do not formally oppose the bill, existing law—PA 14-93—already requires school districts to have policies addressing cardiac emergencies and defibrillator access. "We are not sure what within the legislation would be different from the already established law and policies," the testimony states, raising questions about the necessity and distinction of the proposed changes.

[Essence Divine, Parent Advocate, ConnCAN](#): testified in strong support of SB 1350, advocating for its expansion to require all school staff—rather than just some—to be CPR certified as part of cardiac emergency response plans. Drawing from her experience as a substitute teacher, she highlighted concerns about unreliable communication tools and stressed the importance of timely response: "Think about the response time when a child is in distress and the adult with them isn't CPR certified." She also called for regular assessments of life-saving equipment, emphasizing, "Our students deserve to feel safe, secure, and supported in their place of learning."

[London King](#): testified in support of SB 1350, emphasizing the importance of better preparedness in schools. Three of his cardiac arrests occurred at school while playing basketball. During one episode, no one retrieved the building's AEDs, and action was delayed until paramedics arrived. "Had I not had my implanted defibrillator, my outcome could have been far worse," he said. They called for more AEDs in schools, increased awareness of their locations, and training for both staff and students. "By increasing awareness and accessibility, we can improve survival rates," he urged.

[Seth Lapuk Pediatric Cardiologist, Connecticut Children's Medical Center](#): testified in strong support of SB 1350, which strengthens school cardiac emergency plans and provides \$521K in funding for implementation. He emphasized that timely CPR and AED access can be lifesaving, sharing examples of Connecticut teens who survived cardiac arrest thanks to trained bystanders. "The chance of survival drops by 7%–10% for every minute of delay," he noted, adding that CPR-trained students can become "a generation of lifesavers." He urged the passage of the bill to help prevent avoidable tragedies.

[Nathan Polzun](#): He recounted a sudden cardiac arrest while snowboarding at Okemo Mountain, Vermont. Polzun collapsed unexpectedly but was fortunate that two off-duty police officers were nearby—one performed CPR while the other called ski patrol. The ski patrol used an AED multiple times before transporting the testifier to Dartmouth Hospital, and eventually to Hartford Hospital. This personal story underscores the life-saving importance of immediate CPR and accessible AEDs in emergencies. As he noted, "Luckily, there were two off-duty police officers... and they used the defibrillator on me quite a bit," highlighting the

need for strong Cardiac Emergency Response Plans and equipment access, as proposed in SB 1350.

#### **NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:**

[Fran Rabinowitz, Executive Director, Connecticut Association of Public School](#)

[Superintendents](#): submitted testimony opposing S.B. 1350, expressing concern that while the bill aims to enhance cardiac emergency preparedness in schools, it adds another unfunded mandate to already financially strained districts. She emphasized the burden on school systems, stating, "These unfunded mandates strain local budgets and detract from schools' ability to meet their core educational mission." Rabinowitz acknowledged the importance of student health and safety but stressed that "adequate resources must accompany legislative requirements," urging lawmakers to provide funding support if the bill moves forward.

**Reported by: Chris Peritore**

**Date: 4/7/2025**