

Chairman Roebuck and Members of the House Education Committee:

COPY

My name is Joseph Russell. I have worked as a paramedic for the Philadelphia Fire Department for ten years. I'm currently the President of an organization called CPR/AED Public Awareness and Training Network. A group of paramedics from the Philadelphia Fire Department and I created this organization five years ago with two goals in mind: to increase awareness of sudden cardiac arrest and to provide CPR and defibrillator training. Within three years of working with the Philadelphia School Board, we trained over 1,000 students spanning ten high schools. We have conducted CPR training for staff and placed defibrillators in twelve recreation centers throughout Philadelphia.

Working as a paramedic has given me a unique perspective on this issue. While enroute to a cardiac arrest call, I often wonder; was this person given their best chance, their best opportunity to survive?

When a person suddenly stops breathing his heart stops circulating blood; within three to four minutes his skin color would have changed drastically because he has used all the oxygen reserves in his body. His organs including his heart and brain will begin to shut down and die. His heart may go through a brief period of shaking and quivering instead of contracting. We call this fibrillation. What is needed immediately is for someone to breathe air/oxygen into the person and for someone else to squeeze the blood out of your heart by doing chest compressions in order to circulate your now oxygen enriched blood to your vital organs. If he is lucky enough, there would be a defibrillator near by to stop the erratic electrical activity that is preventing your heart from contracting effectively.

In far too many cases no one is performing these simple steps called CPR. Just giving chest compressions could save a person's life. In most of these cases it was the family member, the friend, the neighbor that was frantically awaiting our arrival in the middle of the street or just outside the bedroom.

The cardiac arrest victim is often found lying in the bed experiencing increased devastation to their heart and brain because their loved ones were not prepared to give CPR.

In too many cases the victim did not have a defibrillator onsite to use. Countless times I was told to do my very best to, "save their loved one". I said, "I would". What I couldn't say is how precious and crucial the time was while waiting for me to arrive, that no CPR was being performed. For every one minute of no CPR, no defibrillation a person loses a 10% chance of survival. "What a shame", that there was no defibrillator onsite that could have possibly doubled this person's chance of survival.

The question I leave with you is, do you want the best chance, the best opportunity to survive sudden cardiac arrest? Is it important enough to you that your mother, your father, your friend, your neighbor, your son or daughter survives sudden cardiac arrest? Do they, too, deserve the best chance of survival? With more people knowing and ready to provide CPR we can give everyone their best opportunity to survive. With a defibrillator at the school, at the recreation center, on the ball field we can give our children their best chance of a long and happy life.

It was once said that you can gauge how civil a society is from how well they care for each other. Do we care enough? As an advocate for CPR and AED programs in schools, I sincerely ask your support of Pennsylvania House Bill 1803.

Respectfully,

Joseph Russell