

Testimony in Support of HB 2529
House Committee on Education
March 25, 2025

Chair Neron, Vice Chairs McIntire and Dobson, and Members of the Committee,

For the record, my name is Cassidy Kotter, and I am a Government Relations Specialist with the Oregon School Employees Association (OSEA), which represents over 25,000 classified school employees across Oregon. On behalf of OSEA, we strongly urge your support for HB 2529. This critical legislation will ensure that every school in Oregon has a well-defined Cardiac Emergency Response Plan (CERP), including access to Automated External Defibrillators (AEDs) and appropriate training for staff.

As classified employees—bus drivers, office staff, instructional assistants, food service workers, custodians, and more—OSEA members are often the first to respond in medical emergencies. When a student, colleague, or community member suffers a sudden cardiac event, mere seconds matter. Having clear, standardized emergency plans, proper training, and accessible AEDs can mean the difference between life and death.

Sudden cardiac medical emergencies can happen to anyone, regardless of age or health history. In fact, it happened to me. After suffering a heart attack in the 4th grade, I went on to experience two other life-threatening cardiac events in the following decade that both prompted cardiac ablation procedures at Doernbecher Children's Hospital. The last time I came dangerously close to losing my life was when I was 15 years old and went into cardiac arrest during my high school aerobics physical education class. I know first-hand how impactful having an easily accessible AED on campus would've been because I endured the pain and symptoms that come with experiencing cardiac trauma for almost an hour as I waited to be transported by ambulance to Salem Hospital's Emergency Room, was put into a hospital room, and given an intravenous antiarrhythmic drug that unsuccessfully slowed my heart rate down. This was all before eventually being assisted by the only tool that would lower my heart rate from the over 200 BPM that I'd been sustaining—an AED.

The extent of the irreversible damage my heart suffered from such sustained trauma is still somewhat uncertain, but I can't help but wonder how circumstances could've been improved if only my high school had had an on-campus AED for utilization by trained staff that hour before medical professionals ultimately relied on it to save my life. Statistics show that immediate access to an AED and CPR can significantly increase survival rates of those experiencing cardiac trauma. However, without a plan in place, too many schools are left unprepared. HB 2529 ensures that every school—not just those with existing resources—has a life-saving strategy.

Furthermore, this bill acknowledges the reality that many school districts lack the necessary funding to implement these critical measures. By appropriating funds through the Department of Education, HB 2529 helps ensure that schools are not forced to choose between safety and budget constraints. This investment will empower all schools, particularly those in under-resourced districts, to comply with best practices for cardiac emergency response.

OSEA is committed to advocating for the safety and well-being of both students and staff. We believe that having the resources to protect lives should not be optional—it should be a standard expectation in every school. HB 2529 is a commonsense, life-saving measure, and it is with my utmost personal gratitude to see that the very cardiologist that performed both of my cardiac ablations at ages 9 and then 15, Dr. Seshandri Balaji, is signed onto a letter of support on record for this bill. We stand in support with him and the other hardworking pediatric cardiologists signed onto said letter of support, and urge an aye vote on HB 2529.

Sincerely,

Cassidy Kotter

Government Relations Specialist, Oregon School Employees Association (OSEA)