

February 15, 2022

Senator Bob Cassilly
James Senate Office Building
11 Bladen Street, Room 401
Annapolis, MD. 21401

Dear Senator Cassilly,

My name is Dr. Karla Guzman de Gordon and I live in Harford County, Maryland.

I am writing to ask for your help by supporting the passage of Senate Bill titled Health - Automated External Defibrillator, First Aid, and CPR - Requirements for Health Clubs.

On July 27, 2017, I was in a fitness class called TRX (Total Body Resistance Exercise). Suddenly, a lady in the class complained that she wasn't feeling well and needed to step out of the room. I noticed she was sitting up for a few minutes and not looking any better, so I left the class to see what was going on. I introduced myself as a physician to set her at ease, and did a quick review of her medical history. At the same time, I was checking her pulse which was noticeably very weak. I immediately called for assistance to help lay her flat on the floor. I asked the owner of the fitness center to call the ambulance. I also asked for an AED (Automated External Defibrillator) device, but to my surprise, there wasn't one available. I also asked if anyone in the class knew how to do CPR in anticipation of a sudden cardiac arrest. However, not a single person had ever received any training. Fortunately for Katie, she came out alive due to the quick arrival of paramedics that day and the hasty use of their AED.

Until that day, I was not aware that AEDs were not required to be available on the premises of all health clubs. It is imperative that AEDs be available for immediate use at all health clubs where people at different fitness levels are exerting themselves. Individuals pushing their bodies to a new level may be unaware of an underlying health condition until they begin to exercise beyond their comfort level. In some, the heart may not tolerate this type of exercise and may lead to a cardiac emergency or sudden cardiac arrest.

Once a person is in cardiac arrest, one of the first steps in the Advanced Cardiac Life Support protocol is to attach the AED as soon as it is available. As an anesthesiologist, I know that when it comes to a sudden cardiac arrest or a cardiac emergency, time is of essence. According to the American Red Cross, "the average response time for first responders once 911 is called is 8-12 minutes." For each minute defibrillation is delayed, the odds of survival are reduced by approximately 7-10%. Therefore, having access to an AED and knowing how to use it is critical. Therefore, it is also important to require employees of fitness facilities to have first aid and CPR training. This is not meant to replace the need to call 911 in case of a cardiac emergency, but rather to increase the odds of survival if such an emergency occurs.

The AED is small, portable, and very user friendly. In our community, there are many great classes that are easily available to receive CPR training. One obstacle to successful implementation of this program is the fear of liability. The Good Samaritan laws must apply to users of AEDs to provide immunity. This is the only way to avoid hesitation of purchase and prompt use of this life saving device.

I appreciate you taking the time to read my testimony and taking a strong stand on this important topic. Please feel free to reach out to me if you have any questions.

With gratitude,

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