

February 20, 2025

To Senator Steve A. Cwodziński
Chair, Senate Education Policy Committee and members of the committee:

We are parents of a son who survived sudden cardiac arrest in 2009 and we are members of a grassroots organization called the Minnesota SCA Advocates. SCA stands for sudden cardiac arrest – when the heart suddenly stops beating effectively and a person will die if something isn't done quickly to bring the heart back to normal rhythm.

Minnesota SCA Advocates is a group established in 2024 with a mission of saving lives from sudden cardiac arrest (SCA) by building a statewide collaboration of individuals and organizations dedicated to education, prevention and treatment of sudden cardiac arrest.

Over forty individuals are members of the organization – many of them parents of children who had SCA. Some lost a precious son or daughter to SCA, others have a son or daughter who survived SCA (due to prompt cardiopulmonary resuscitation or CPR by bystanders and the use of an automated external defibrillator or AED). Other members are adult SCA survivors, community advocates and/or leaders involved in SCA education, awareness and CPR/AED training and AED placement.

Members of our group have helped train thousands of Minnesotans in CPR and AED use, and have raised money for AEDs in schools, parks and public buildings, and have conducted heart screenings to identify underlying heart issues which can cause a sudden cardiac arrest.

Our son Teddy went into sudden cardiac arrest on June 16, 2009 on the football field at Wayzata High School during summer football conditioning. Thankfully the coaches present responded quickly, were trained in CPR and administered it while the AED was run from the school and applied. These actions saved his life. But – Teddy was one of few lucky ones as these coaches responded well and happened to be trained.

I understand that your committee may soon review Senate File 1457 regarding cardiac emergency response plans for schools. From own experience and over 15 years of SCA advocacy and training, we can vouch for the importance of this bill and many other states have already adopted a similar bill.

Thank you for considering this vital life-saving legislation.

Sincerely,
Kim and Norman Okerstrom