

Tabitha Muncy, MS, LAT, ATC
Regarding HB 1363
1/26/2025

My name is Tabitha Muncy and I am an athletic trainer at Valley City High School and an emergency medical responder for the Dazey Fire Department. Ever since perusing this career, I have been an advocate for increasing the safety of our student-athletes. I am testifying about lack of policies and procedures in place regarding emergency action planning specifically for cardiac arrests in schools and athletic events. I am in full support of HB 1363 Cardiac Emergency Response Plans for public, nonpublic schools, and athletic events in North Dakota.

My job as an athletic trainer is to prevent injury and illness in athletes, recognize and evaluate injuries, develop and implement emergency action plans, create rehabilitation programs, provide therapeutic interventions, and perhaps most importantly, provide immediate care in emergency situations. As this bill greatly pertains to my career, I have also had a personal experience that has impacted the way I prepare for cardiac emergencies.

On June 12, 2023, I was working at a high school boys basketball camp at the University of Jamestown. While at this camp, an assistant coach of one of the teams suddenly collapsed. After I determined that the coach went into cardiac arrest, I initiated the emergency action plan and started cardiopulmonary resuscitation. A bystander called 911 and I directed someone to get the AED while the assistant coach performed rescue breaths. The AED was applied, and a shock was given. I then continued chest compressions until EMTs later relieved me and were able to stabilize the patient so that he could be transferred by ambulance and later life flighted to Fargo. I would later find out that the coach had suffered from a stroke, but after performing CPR on him that day, I did not know what his condition would be, whether he would survive or not, I had no idea. As professionals in the healthcare field, we often replay situations like these in our heads of what or how we could have done better. After replaying this situation many, many times in my head, I still had comfort knowing that myself, the bystanders who assisted me, EMTs and paramedics that day had done everything in our power to give that patient the best possible outcome.

We gave that patient the best possible outcome because bystanders immediately activated the emergency response system by calling 911, someone who was CPR certified recognized that the patient was in cardiac arrest and started CPR immediately, someone knew where the AED was located and the AED was applied quickly, and the EMTs responded in a short amount of time. If we want to give every person the fighting chance of survival like this coach had, we need to be prepared. Every school and athletic facility needs to have a cardiac emergency response plan that is practiced annually and AEDs that are easily accessible. We also need to have more people who are certified in CPR and to practice these protocols with their local EMS. Being in the state that we are in, there are a lot of rural schools that may take an ambulance 20-30 minutes to arrive at, which is why it is so important to have these plans in place, because during a cardiac emergency, every second counts.

The odds for a full recovery were not in the patient's favor. However, he made a full recovery, and I had the honor of meeting him and his family who are thankful that he is still here, living his full life as a husband, father, and grandfather.

This unfortunate experience reiterates the importance of a cardiac emergency response plan. Each public and nonpublic school conducts fire, tornado, and other emergency or disaster drills, so why not a cardiac emergency response plan when statistically about 23,000 children experience a cardiac arrest outside of a hospital each year with 40 % of these events being sport

related. Being an athletic trainer and emergency medical responder, my job mostly involves preparing and executing emergency action plans. While I have been included in many emergency response drills for spine injuries, stroke, and cardiac arrest, I often say one can never be too prepared. After any type of emergency I have been a part of, I have never heard anyone say: “We were way too prepared for that.”

I hope my story gives more insight as to why passing this bill so is beneficial to not only our students, but teachers, coaches, officials, spectators, or anyone else who may suffer from cardiac arrest inside a school or athletic facility. Thank you for reading my testimony, your consideration of these matters is much appreciated.