

March 15, 2024

Senator Baumgardner, Chair  
Senate Education Committee  
HB 2494- Proponent

After a year of online learning due to the pandemic, my 15-year-old son, Rocky, was excited to join the cross-country team in Atchison, Kansas. Rocky really had the determination and heart of a champion, which led him to be named after Sylvester Stallone's fictional character, Rocky Balboa, when I adopted him and his twin brother at the age of 7. I recognized that after years of foster care, where they had little control over their situation, giving the boys the option to choose their own names would be meaningful.

Rocky met with the cross-country coach and was told that while the team had already begun practice sessions, Rocky would need a physical before joining the team. Eager to train, Rocky stayed after school that afternoon to run the track while his twin brother, Alias, worked in the school lab. That day Rocky collapsed on the track. We learned Rocky went into cardiac arrest from a rare heart condition called Brugada Syndrome, an inherited heart condition that can result in dangerous irregular heartbeats and can lead to cardiac arrest. After four days and multiple tests, doctors determined Rocky's brain was no longer functioning and he was taken off life support. Like the true heart of a champion, Rocky's legacy continued as an organ donor for five different people.

After Rocky's passing, Alias underwent a series of tests that determined he also has Brugada Syndrome. We purchased an automated external defibrillator (AED) and we carry it wherever we go. The school also now has an AED, but I will always wonder, are the staff truly prepared?

The American Heart Association is advocating for Cardiac Emergency Response Plans (CERP) in schools across Kansas for thousands of students like Rocky and Alias.

These plans establish specific steps to reduce death from cardiac arrest in school settings. The safety of students, school staff, and school visitors can be enhanced when school CERP teams are trained and empowered to administer lifesaving care until emergency medical services arrive.

I ask that you support HB 2494 to ensure that all schools in Kansas are prepared with AED access that follows national guidelines and that key personnel are trained in CPR.

Sincerely,

Bill Delfs  
Rocky and Alias' dad  
Atchison, Kansas