



TO: Senate Committee on Judiciary & Public Safety
FROM: Jodi Wenzel, BS ADN, RN Program Coordinator, Project ADAM, Children's Wisconsin
DATE: Wednesday, October 22, 2025
RE: Support for SB 317 – Cardiac emergency response plans in schools

Chair Wanggaard and members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to share Children's Wisconsin's support for SB 317. My name is Jodi Wenzel, and I am the Program Coordinator of Project ADAM at Children's Wisconsin. I'm joined today by Patty Clanton and Joe Lemel – parents of Adam Lemel, for whom Project ADAM is named and Rachel Clausen who is a school social worker.

As many of you know, Children's Wisconsin is the state's only independent health care system dedicated solely to the health and well-being of kids. We offer a wide array of programs and services inside the walls of our hospitals and clinics and out in the communities we serve, including with schools and community partners.

When someone goes into sudden cardiac arrest and stops breathing, every single second is crucial. Every tick of the clock can mean the difference between a full recovery, brain damage or even death. Sudden cardiac arrest is exactly that — sudden and unexpected. However, a well-practiced plan, CPR training and the availability of an AED can double or triple a person's chance of survival. Physicians at Children's Wisconsin who treat patients who have experienced sudden cardiac arrest credit trained bystanders who take immediate action in the event of sudden cardiac arrest as lifesavers.

Project ADAM, which stands for Automated Defibrillators in Adam's Memory, just celebrated its 25th anniversary. The organization was created following the death of Adam Lemel, a 17-year-old Whitefish Bay high school student, who collapsed while playing basketball. Adam suffered a Sudden Cardiac Arrest (SCA). Defibrillation from an AED could have saved his life. Following Adam's passing, Adam's parents, Patty and Joe, collaborated with Children's Wisconsin to create this program in Adam's memory.

Children's Wisconsin serves as the national headquarters for Project ADAM which has expanded as a nationwide initiative with over 52 affiliated health care systems in 35 states. Our team is comprised of pediatric cardiologists and electrophysiologists, advanced practice providers, nurses, school nurses, health educators and emergency medical providers. The mission of our organization is to equip schools with tools, and the help of local expertise, to implement cardiac emergency response plans (CERPs). Children's Wisconsin operates Project Adam as a benefit to the health of the community and invests upwards of \$100,000 each year in addition to private philanthropic support.

Project ADAM provides resources and consultation for schools to help them become what we call "Heart Safe" – which means being properly prepared to respond during a sudden cardiac emergency. This includes creating a CERP as well as conducting training and drills for staff.

Project ADAM provides the foundation for a school to develop and sustain their program, including one-on-one consultation, educational workshops, program templates and ongoing program support. Since Project ADAM was founded in 1999, more than 300 lives have been saved nationwide through the work of our affiliates.

In Wisconsin, nearly 525 schools across 32 counties are designated as Heart Safe Schools thanks to Project ADAM's support, education and training. Over 100 districts are in the process of completing their Heart Safe designation and schools renew their designation every three years to ensure their emergency plans, training and

supplies are current. As part of a new initiative, Project ADAM is beginning to work more with youth sports groups and community sites on cardiac emergency preparedness.

Because approximately 20 percent of a community is in its schools on any given day, including students, teachers, staff and family members, a focused effort on cardiac arrest and preparedness in schools is critical to protecting our children and others in the community and beyond. SB 317 would require schools to have CERPs for cardiac emergencies that occur at schools or at school-sponsored athletic events. CERPs help schools create a cardiac emergency response team and develop a specific plan that is practiced regularly with appropriate resources, so they're prepared to save lives and help prevent unthinkable tragedies.

I work directly with the schools to help them get their programs off the ground and I have seen Project ADAM make a tremendous impact on the communities that we serve – there have been a number of sudden cardiac arrest saves that have happened in Wisconsin, *because* the school was trained and designated as Heart Safe.

SB 317 represents an important step forward in recognizing the importance of CERPs to promote heart health and safety. Project ADAM has the tools and resources at the ready to help schools that have yet to implement a cardiac emergency response plan. Project ADAM is proud to play a role in providing schools with the training and ongoing support needed to be Heart Safe. We look forward to continued partnerships with schools and community partners to find ways to improve access to AEDs and necessary resources to help schools implement CERPs.

Thank you for the opportunity to share Children's Wisconsin's support for SB 317. I am happy to answer any questions.

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Children's Wisconsin

Patty Clanton
Parent Advocate

Joe Lemel
Parent Advocate