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Friday, March 19, 1999

Senator Judy Robson  
State Capitol  
PO Box 7882  
Madison, WI 53708

Dear Senator Robson:

Thank you on behalf of the American Heart Association for your support and co-sponsorship of SB90/AB239 relating to public access to defibrillation. Your interest and leadership in working on this legislation will help get AEDs into the hands of people who are often first on the scene in sudden cardiac arrest situations.

Sudden cardiac arrest is a major unresolved health problem. Each year, it strikes more than 300,000 Americans – nearly 1,000 per day – most of whom die before reaching the hospital. Thousands of these people could be saved if an automatic external defibrillator (AED) was on every emergency vehicle and available in facilities where large numbers of people gather.

Defibrillation is an important link in the chain of survival. For every minute that a victim in ventricular fibrillation must wait to be defibrillated, their chance of survival decreases by 10%. This lifesaving legislation will have an immediate positive impact on Wisconsin.

Again, thank you for making saving lives in Wisconsin one of your priorities this session. I look forward to working with you on this important issue.

Sincerely,

Maureen A. Cassidy  
Public Advocacy Director

*Thanks for your leadership!*



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**Testimony in Support of SB 90/AB239  
Relating to Public Access Defibrillation**

to the  
Senate Committee on Human Services and Aging

*April 6, 1999*

**Peter Rahko, MD**

*Associate Professor of Medicine and  
Interim Chief of Cardiology  
UW Medical School*

President, American Heart Association  
Northland Affiliate (MN, ND, SD, WI)

Chairman Robson and members of the Senate Committee on Human Services and Aging, thank you for the opportunity to speak before you today.

**The American Heart Association strongly supports SB 90 and its companion, AB 239, relating to public access defibrillation.**

Sudden cardiac arrest is a major unresolved health problem. Each year, it strikes more than 300,000 Americans – nearly 1,000 per day – most of whom die before reaching the hospital. Survival from sudden cardiac arrest in adults depends directly on the time to defibrillation; with every minute of delay in defibrillation reducing the chance of survival by 7%-10%.

Public Access to Defibrillation (PAD) is an important new public health initiative from the American Heart Association. The ultimate goal of PAD is to increase survival from out-of-hospital sudden cardiac arrests in adults by shortening the delay to defibrillation. The PAD initiative attempts to accomplish this goal by encouraging the development of automatic external defibrillator (AED) programs in communities. These programs should accomplish two objectives: (1) expand the placement of AEDs in the community and (2) increase the number of rescuers authorized, trained and equipped to use an AED.

For many years, the early defibrillation link in the chain was something that could only be performed by extensively trained emergency medical professionals. However, current AED technology has evolved such that the lay user can be properly prepared to operate the device with minimal training. In September 1998, the AHA introduced the course *HeartSaver AED for lay rescuers and first responders*. This course provides video-based instruction that integrates the skills of performing CPR and using an AED in a single four-hour course.

In Wisconsin, however, the law has not kept up with the technology. Current law requires, at a minimum, a person be trained and certified as a first responder-defibrillation to operate an AED.

That is why the AHA in Wisconsin, in partnership with a number of organizations who will testify today, is currently working on state legislation to allow lay users to be trained in the use of AEDs. If the bill becomes law, it will help get AEDs in the hands of the people who may be first on the scene of a sudden cardiac arrest. Such people may include police officers, sheriff deputies, security guards, caddies, fitness center staff, family members of those people with certain heart conditions, among others in the community.

As proposed, the bill accomplishes the following:

1. Allows lay users to operate an automatic external defibrillator if they have been trained in a nationally recognized CPR/automatic external defibrillator training course approved by DHFS.
2. Requires written notification to the local EMS system by the site owner when an AED is placed in the community. The notification includes the location of the AED, the type of defibrillator and the intended usage area.
3. Requires the owner of an AED to maintain the device according to manufacturer's guidelines.
4. Requires that there be medical direction from a licensed physician for an AED training program.
5. Provides limited immunity from civil liability to AED users, premises owners on which AEDs are located, AED trainers and physician medical directors overseeing the training program.

The AHA supports two changes proposed by the Department of Health and Family Services as follows:

- require continuing education training on AED use at least every two years;
- approval of a training course by DHFS is dependent on the training course having specific qualifications for instructors.

The AHA greatly appreciates the bi-partisan support of the 47 legislators who have co-sponsored this legislation. We urge the support of the Senate Committee on Human Services and Aging and are hopeful for swift action by the committee and the full legislature. This truly is a matter of life and death for all citizens across Wisconsin.

Again, thank you for the opportunity to present to you today and please do not hesitate to contact the American Heart Association with any questions.