



**American  
Heart  
Association.**

**Media Contact:**

Kevin Pauley, Communications Director  
Kevin.Pauley@heart.org; (304) 444-6494

## Governor Justice signs statewide Cardiac Emergency Response Plan bill for school athletics into law

*Bill helps schools establish plans to save lives during cardiac arrest at school athletic events*

CHARLESTON, WV, April 3, 2024 — Cardiac arrest can happen to anyone and happen anywhere – even in schools. According to the American Heart Association, about 10% of people who experience hospital cardiac arrests outside of a hospital survive. CPR, especially if performed immediately, can double or triple the chance of survival.

Because of this, the Association is excited to announce the signing of Senate Bill 602 into law, which helps West Virginia schools establish Cardiac Emergency Response Plans (CERPs) so that, should a cardiac arrest happen at a school athletic facility or athletic event, people are prepared to respond quickly and appropriately. The bill was sponsored by Senator Amy Grady (R-Mason) and championed in the House by Delegates Amy Summers (R-Taylor) and Heather Tully (R-Nicholas). Gov. Jim Justice signed the bill into law during a special ceremony, where he was joined by Gryffin and Leigh Cavender, as well as representatives from the American Heart Association.

Last year, Leigh Cavender’s eight-year-old son, Gryffin, suffered a cardiac arrest while at school. Thanks to the quick actions of faculty and staff, incorporating CPR and use of the school’s automated external defibrillator (AED), as well as the quick response from the local EMS team, Gryffin was resuscitated and survived.

“West Virginia schools are now equipped to handle cardiac emergencies,” said Senator Grady. “This policy is focused on the safety and well-being of our children and I’m proud to sponsor a bill that will save lives.”

“We are so grateful to Senator Grady, Delegate Tully, and Delegate Summers for their leadership on this important bill and to Governor Justice for signing it into law,” said Emily Hanna, Government Relations Director for the Association. “We know that implementing CERPs with American Heart Association guidelines will protect and save lives of not only students, but staff and visitors as well. This is truly lifesaving work.”

The American Heart Association, a founding member of the Smart Heart Sports Coalition established by the National Football League in 2023, and their [You’re the Cure](#) advocates worked alongside coalition members and other organizations to push for this policy that will increase survival rates from cardiac arrests that happen outside of a hospital.

This bill ensures that school athletic events will have a practiced plan to address cardiac events. Schools with a CERP can increase cardiac arrest survival rates by 50% or more by enabling a trained lay-responder led team to take action with CPR, AEDs, and in coordination with Emergency Medical Services. This will have a direct impact on the Association’s [Nation of Lifesavers](#)™ campaign, a movement to double survival rates from cardiac arrest by 2030, which focuses on the importance of everyone knowing the life-saving skill of CPR.

- MORE -



**American  
Heart  
Association.**

**Media Contact:**

Kevin Pauley, Communications Director  
Kevin.Pauley@heart.org; (304) 444-6494

“On behalf of the National Football League and the nearly 40 additional members of the Smart Heart Sports Coalition, I applaud Governor Justice and the legislature for enacting this crucial, life-saving legislation,” said Kenneth Edmonds, Vice President of Government Relations and Public Policy for the National Football League. “The new law ensures that schools have in place three, evidence-based core elements to effectively respond to sudden cardiac arrests or other life-threatening, cardiac emergencies – an effective, and rehearsed plan of action; AEDs at or nearby school athletic venue or event; and CPR and AED-use training for key personnel, including coaches. This law marks a victory for young people across the state by making school communities safer and more resilient.”

“We are just so thankful the American Heart Association stepped up with this bill to put in place a cardiac emergency response plan in schools and for their diligent efforts to see it to fruition,” said Leigh Cavender. “We are also appreciative that the representatives received the plan so well and worked so hard on the details and passing of the bill. This is an amazing step towards creating guidelines, awareness and training that will certainly save lives in the future.”

Added Gryffin, “I’m really, really, really happy that it passed so kids in school will be safer!”

For more information, contact Emily Hanna at [emily.hanna@heart.org](mailto:emily.hanna@heart.org).

**About the American Heart Association**

The American Heart Association is a relentless force for a world of longer, healthier lives. We are dedicated to ensuring equitable health in all communities. Through collaboration with numerous organizations, and powered by millions of volunteers, we fund innovative research, advocate for the public’s health and share lifesaving resources. The Dallas-based organization has been a leading source of health information for a century. During 2024 - our Centennial year - we celebrate our rich 100-year history and accomplishments. As we forge ahead into our second century of bold discovery and impact our vision is to advance health and hope for everyone, everywhere. Connect with us on [heart.org](http://heart.org), Facebook, X or by calling 1-800-AHA-USA1.