



SMART HEART SPORTS COALITION

National Football League, American Heart Association, Damar Hamlin’s Chasing M’s Foundation, and Other Smart Heart Sports Coalition Advocates Team Up for Student Athlete Safety

Governor Whitmer signs legislation that makes schools better equipped and prepared to respond to sudden cardiac arrest

Chasing M’s Foundation and NFL donate \$120,000 worth of AEDs to Michigan high schools and youth sports organizations

DETROIT, MICHIGAN – April 27, 2024 – The Smart Heart Sports Coalition, represented by the National Football League, the American Heart Association, and Damar Hamlin, joined together today with Governor Gretchen Whitmer, Michigan House Speaker Joe Tate, Representatives Tyrone Carter and John Fitzgerald, and other advocates to highlight new, statewide measures aimed at preventing fatalities due to sudden arrest (SCA) in schools across the state.

Today’s press conference was held at Corner Ballpark, where many youth-focused activities took place as part of NFL Draft Experience, the league’s football, interactive theme park. The day also included a Chasing M’s CPR Tour event hosted by Damar Hamlin’s Foundation, providing Hands-Only CPR, and AED-use instruction to youth sports and community organizations. Hamlin’s foundation has held similar events in Buffalo, Cincinnati, and his hometown of Pittsburgh.

At the historic field, Michigan Governor Gretchen Whitmer signed into law two life-saving bills – House Bill 5527 and House Bill 5528. The bill package improves school safety by requiring schools to develop cardiac emergency response plans, or CERPs, tailored to school campuses as well as school-sponsored athletic events. In addition, the bills require automated external defibrillators, or AEDs, to be readily available in these locations, and for key school personnel, including all high school athletic coaches, to be trained in CPR, and AED use. Once the new law takes effect during the 2024-2025 school year, Michigan will have in place all three, life-saving policies that the Smart Heart Sports Coalition promotes.

“All children should feel safe when they participate in school sports,” said **Governor Whitmer**. “Today, I am proud to sign commonsense, bipartisan bills that will require coaches to be trained in CPR and AED use and ensure all public and private schools have a plan in the event of an on-field medical emergency and practice it. By taking proactive measures, we can keep our kids safe while they play.”

“The signing of the AED bills into law is ultimately about improving the overall public safety in schools and related school events open to the community,” said **Speaker Joe Tate**, (D-Detroit). “I learned from the start of my professional career that the work of the NFL is not limited to the football field. They are our partners in supporting young athletes, parents, and local communities. This legislation will go a long way to improve school preparedness in case of a sudden cardiac event.”

“On behalf of the National Football League and the nearly 40 additional members of the Smart Heart Sports Coalition, I applaud Governor Whitmer and the Michigan legislature for working together to advance this crucial, life-saving legislation,” said **Brendon Plack, NFL Senior Vice President of Public Policy and Government Affairs**. “These vital, evidence-based measures ensure that Michigan’s school communities are better equipped and prepared to respond to sudden cardiac arrests, if and when they occur. The laws mark a victory for young people and their safety across the state.”

Representatives Fitzgerald and Carter, the sponsors of HB 5527 and HB 5528, respectively, also took part in the event. The two legislators played key roles, working closely with Speaker Tate, colleagues in the Michigan House and Senate and members of the Smart Heart Sports Coalition, to introduce and advance the bills in both chambers.

“Today is another big step in our ongoing work to keep people safe across Michigan — and potentially even save lives. With the signing of House Bills 5527 and 5528, we’re ensuring that every school has the tools it needs to save those who suffer cardiac emergencies and the know-how to respond,” said **state Rep. John Fitzgerald** (D-Wyoming). “These bills not only represent our work to make schools safer, but also show the strength we have when we come together for the common good.”

“This is a great day and a big way to deliver on improving the emergency preparedness in our schools and communities at large. The partnership with the NFL and others is an example of allyship and putting the safety of everyone first. The donation of the AEDs by the NFL, coupled with the legislation we’ve passed requiring all athletic coaches be trained and certified in both CPR and AED throughout schools in Michigan, will make Michiganders safer — especially at large sporting events or other public events,” said **state Rep. Tyrone Carter** (D-Detroit).

During the press conference, Damar Hamlin and Anna Isaacson, NFL Senior Vice President of Social Responsibility, announced a joint donation of 60 AEDs from the Chasing M’s Foundation and the NFL Foundation to 50 high schools with sports programs and several youth sports organizations throughout Michigan. The contribution to high schools in under-resourced communities helped to achieve the coalition’s goal of equipping all high school athletic venues across the county with life-saving devices.

“Since experiencing cardiac arrest in January of 2023, I’ve been blessed with the opportunity to use my charity to help save lives,” said **Damar Hamlin**. “Today, I’m honored to partner with the NFL Smart Heart Sports Coalition and the American Heart Association to provide no-cost, Hands-Only CPR Training at our Chasing M’s Foundation CPR Tour event. Amid the excitement of the NFL Draft, we’ve come together to give more than \$120,000 worth of AEDs to

schools and youth groups in Michigan. As my experience has shown us, this life-saving technology is critical to protecting kids for years to come - and will help to save lives.”

Anna Isaacson, NFL Senior Vice President of Social Responsibility, added: “The NFL Foundation is pleased to join with Damar’s Chasing M’s Foundation to contribute AEDs to high schools throughout Michigan. This donation serves as part of the league’s investment in Michigan, and we know it will provide important returns well beyond Draft. AEDs are indispensable devices that better equip and prepare school communities to respond to cardiac emergencies when they occur. Ensuring the accessibility of AEDs is a winning game plan for students and school communities across the state.”

As part of Hamlin’s “CPR Tour,” the American Heart Association, a leading and founding member of the Smart Heart Sports Coalition, provided Hands-Only CPR instruction to attendees. Last year, the American Heart Association launched the “Nation of Lifesavers” campaign, a multi-year initiative focused on promoting the life-saving skill of CPR, especially among middle- and high-school students, educators, and families across the country. Hamlin is a National Ambassador of the campaign, collaborating closely with American Heart Association leadership, and broad network of volunteers and supporters.

“Saving lives from sudden cardiac arrest depends on having a strong chain of survival across the emergency response system. This means immediately activating 911, starting quality CPR compressions, having an AED nearby and using it, having EMS on scene, and ensuring quality hospital care,” said **Nancy Brown, CEO of the American Heart Association**. “As the American Heart Association celebrates 100 years of lifesaving work, we are proud to recognize the state of Michigan for their legislative efforts and to stand alongside the NFL and Damar Hamlin’s Chasing M’s Foundation as founding members of the Smart Heart Sports Coalition to advocate for evidence-based policies that will save lives among high school students who suffer sudden cardiac arrest.”

House Bills 5527 and 5528

H.B. 5527 and H.B. 5528, sponsored by Representatives John Fitzgerald and Troy Carter respectively, are life-saving measures that go hand in hand. Specifically, HB 5527 builds on and expands current law by requiring elementary and secondary schools throughout the state to develop and implement cardiac emergency response plans, or CERPs, at school-sponsored athletic events, as well as on school campuses as required by current law. As a component of the CERPs, school personnel must be designated as part of a cardiac emergency response team, all of whom must be trained in CPR and AED use. H.B. 5528 reinforces the ranks of such lay responders by requiring all high school athletic coaches – not just head coaches of teams (as required by the Michigan High School Athletic Association – to obtain CPR certification.

Smart Heart Sports Coalition

Founded in March 2023 in response to the life-saving emergency response and care provided to Buffalo Bills Safety Damar Hamlin, the Smart Heart Sports Coalition seeks to drive the adoption in all 50 states of three evidence-based policies proven to prevent fatalities from Sudden Cardiac Arrest (SCA) among high school students. These are:

(1) Clearly-marked AEDs at or within minutes of each high school athletic venue where games, practices, or other events are held

(2) An athletic Emergency Action Plan (EAP) that is specific to each athletic venue, and posted, widely distributed, regularly rehearsed, and updated annually, if needed

(3) Education in CPR, including AED use, for coaches and other key personnel.

The coalition is comprised of nearly 40 organizations, including major sports leagues and organizations, as well as leading patient and health advocacy groups across the country. Learn more at www.smartheartsports.com.

Chasing M's Foundation

Damar Hamlin's charity is dedicated to the development, health and safety of youth through sports, engagement activities, training and programming. Since experiencing cardiac arrest on January 2, 2023, Hamlin has been dedicated to increasing awareness of the need for CPR training and AED access, advocating for legislation, and launching his Chasing M's CPR Tour to give back to others. Given an unexpected life mission, Hamlin is passionate about creating programs and initiatives that will encourage young people to live their dreams and inspire others who face adversity. To learn more, go to: <https://www.chasingmsfoundation.com>.

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, Facebook, X or by calling 1-800-AHA- USA1.