Testimony by:

Sarah Poole
American Heart Association, Midwest Affiliate
House Education Committee
May 1, 2013

Chairperson Lyons and members of the committee, my name is Sarah Poole and I am here today on behalf of the volunteers and staff of the American Heart Association to express support for HB 4272. This bill would allow schools to replace one annual fire drill with a cardiac emergency response drill and would require schools to put into place a life-saving cardiac emergency response plan. Well-coordinated, rehearsed responses during a cardiac emergency can mean the difference between life and death for students and visitors in our school buildings across the state.

Cardiac Arrest is one manifestation of heart disease which occurs when the heart's electrical system malfunctions and the heart stops working normally. Death follows almost immediately. Approximately 300,000 out of hospital cardiac arrests occur in the US annually and analysis of mortality data from 1999-2009 indicates that as many as 329 sudden cardiac arrest deaths occur in Michigan alone.[1] We hear of cases of cardiac arrest in the news – dramatic, horrible, heart-breaking cases where a young athlete dies suddenly on the football field or a mother watching her child's volleyball game collapses in the bleachers. But did you know that in many cases these individuals can be saved? Cardiac arrest can be reversed if CPR is started and the heart is returned to a normal rhythm by an electrical shock from an Automated External Defibrillator (or AED) within minutes. Under these circumstances, the young athlete can often be saved. But this must happen quickly! For every minute of delay in returning the heart to a normal rhythm, there is a 10% decrease in the chances for survival. A 5 minute delay reduces the chance of survival to 50%.

That is why Cardiac Emergency Response Drills are so important and why I am here today. I want to stress the importance of ensuring that our schools are safe places for our children and for our community members in the event of a cardiac emergency. The importance of having an emergency plan in place – who calls 911, who runs to get the AED, is the AED readily available and properly maintained, who begins CPR – and having the opportunity to practice the plan is invaluable. In fact, as early as 2004, the American Heart Association, in collaboration with

several other leading healthcare organizations including the American Academy of Pediatrics, National Association of School Nurses, National Association of State EMS Directors and others, published a scientific statement urging the implementation of school emergency response plans which include AEDs and CPR training.[2] The statement outlines the key components of a quality emergency response plan in schools and I am very pleased to see that HB 4272 includes the majority of these components including:

- Recognition of a cardiac medical emergency;
- Timely activation of a pre-identified emergency response team;
- The inclusion of an AED when one or more is available on the school campus;
- A plan for effective, timely, efficient communication across the school campus;
- Coordination with the local EMS system;
- CPR and AED training when possible;
- Assessment of plan efficacy after drills and/or emergency events.

The American Heart Association is urging your support of HB 4272. You can take a leadership role in helping to make our schools safer places for students and visitors to learn, work and play. Thank you.

[1] "Too Young to Die: An Update on the Impact of Sudden Cardiac Arrest Death of the Young in Michigan 1999-2011" Division of Genomics, Perinatal Health and Chronic Disease Epidemiology.

[2] Hazinski MF, et al. "Response to Cardiac Arrest and Selected Life-Threatening Medical Emergencies: The Medical Emergency Response Plan for Schools: A Statement for Healthcare Providers, Policymakers, School Administrators and Community Leaders". *Circulation* 2004; 109; 278-291.