

Good afternoon. My name is Steven Silva and I am the President of Aidan's Heart Foundation. But far more importantly, I am the husband of Christy and the father of three beautiful boys: Aidan, Devin, and Quentin. It is in Aidan's honor that SB 606 is named, for three years ago, Aidan passed away suddenly and unexpectedly from Unexplained Sudden Cardiac Arrest. To this day, we have no explanation from the medical community despite numerous tests as to what caused Aidan's heart to suddenly stop. It is in Aidan's honor that I stand here today.

I want to thank Senator Dinniman and Senator Rafferty for authoring and initially sponsoring this bill, one that will protect students, parents, teachers, administrators, and community members from a condition that rarely has any symptoms and leads to the sudden death of over 1,000 people a day in this nation. I think the fact that this is a bi-partisan bill is important for two primary reasons. First, it is no secret that bi-partisan cooperation has been difficult to achieve at both the state and national level recently. Agreement between the parties can be politically damaging these days for folks regarding certain issues. But Senators Dinniman and Rafferty bravely demonstrated that some issues are worthy of crossing the aisle, and others have boldly followed in their example. To date, we have 23 co-sponsors in the Senate, nearly half the chamber. And among those 23 co-sponsors are half of the Senate leadership officeholders, representing both parties, including the Majority Leader, Senator Dominic Pileggi and Minority Leader, Senator Jay Costa. This bill has

sizeable support from those who have the ability to move it forward to protect our children. It is our hope and expectation they do just that.

Secondly, bi-partisan support for this bill is important because in a very real way, Sudden Cardiac Arrest is bi-partisan. It knows no party allegiance, does not care about mandates or taxes, has no regional alliances, and can strike anywhere, anytime, without warning. Sudden Cardiac Arrest is an electrical disturbance, and the heart can only be restarted by the electrical shock provided by an AED. Nothing else. By the end of today's legislative session, when we all go home to dinner with our families, somewhere between 16-20 other families in this country will go home without their son or daughter because of Sudden Cardiac Arrest. Sixteen to twenty families tonight will ask why them, why did this happen, what could have happened differently to prevent the soul-destroying pain now invading their lives?

But together, we can do what we can to prevent those families in Pennsylvania from enduring the horrible fate so many of us gathered here today have had to face. We will not save every person in this state. Sudden Cardiac Arrest, unfortunately, is not that accommodating, but not trying simply because we cannot do it all is unconscionable. Those of us gathered here today are not looking, nor expecting state government to fix the problem on its own. "Aidan's Law" is modeled after Act 4, passed in 2001, which established a program to provide two AEDs for every school district and additional AEDs at reduced cost. That was a great start, but the reality is, absent a mandate, most school districts, despite having more than two schools, only

accepted the minimum offer from the state. Many schools are large enough individually to require several AEDs to truly abide by the guidelines put forth by medical experts. But we're not seeking that, nor are we waiting for the state to cover all schools so completely. Since our first, "5K for Aidan J.," fundraiser, we've helped place over 20 AEDs in schools, on athletic fields, even our local fire chief's truck. But long before us, the Greg W. Moyer Foundation in Senator Argall's district was placing AEDs in Monroe County and beyond. The Louis Savino III Foundation in Senator McIlhinney's district was placing AEDs all over southeast PA, the entire state, and beyond our borders. The Nicholas Ryan Over Foundation started in Carlisle, PA in Senator Vance's district, but they haven't stopped there. Those families are here today, and there are *so many more*. These organizations embody the true meaning of what it means to live in a commonwealth. We ask the state to honor **its** promise made over 200 hundred years ago to establish "free government.....founded on the authority of the people and instituted for their peace, safety and happiness." So while gaps will remain in coverage, the state's involvement can drastically help speed up the process of protecting our state's children.

Some have argued that many schools already have AEDs from that 2001 program, so why do we need another? To that I say that the technology employed in those machines was developed over 20 years ago. How many of us in an emergency would trust a 20-year old cell phone, or a 20-year old fire extinguisher? If our state equipped emergency personnel with 20-year old cell phones, there would be uproar. If

a school kept a fire extinguisher for that long, it would be held liable for negligence.

And I can say with confidence that 16 kids a day do not die from school fires. So why assume a 20-year old AED is good enough?

And updating an AED program can come at a relatively low cost. This AED program we hope to see our leaders re-establish would account for 1/100 of 1% of the state's education budget. So for every dollar the state of Pennsylvania spends on education each year, we're asking them to protect our kids for 1/100 of a penny. That's it. Are our children not worth 1/100 of a penny each year?

Many schools already have AED programs, so we are not starting from scratch. Three children in our home county of Chester were saved last school year from an SCA because their schools understood not the luxury, but the necessity of having AEDs in their schools. Two of those families are with us here today, the Allans and the Holmes, to urge our lawmakers to help protect the rest of our state's children. Tell Bill and Kathy Allan that Blair was not worth the minimal investment by Villa Maria Academy. Tell Tim and Carol Holmes that Dylan was not worth the minimal investment by the West Chester Area School District. Thanks to those schools, those kids **are** eating dinner with their parents tonight. Minimal investment for the most maximum return of all - the return of our children to their homes at the end of the school day. Is that not worth 1/100 of 1% of our education budget?

Christy, Devin, Quentin, and I attended Governor Corbett's signing of Act 59 in May of last year in Montgomery County. Act 59 mandates that all coaches, trainers,

and officials be trained to detect the signs and symptoms of Sudden Cardiac Arrest, and remove a student-athlete from practice or competition until cleared by a doctor. The Governor and the bill's primary sponsor, Representative Mike Vereb, proudly touted the bill as the first of its kind in the nation, and rightfully so. Pennsylvania has a long history of leading the nation in many ways for which we can be proud. But nineteen other states already have AED laws in place - not programs, but permanent laws. New York and New Jersey mandate that every school and every athletic event be equipped with an AED on site. Now that our state has **twice** set the precedent that preventing Sudden Cardiac Arrest is essential, and our coaches, trainers, and officials know more than they used to about SCA, why not give them the **ONLY** tool that can pull a victim from its grip? Why not? Are our children not as worthy of protection as New York's and New Jersey's?

This law will not bring Aidan back. Our lawmakers' political will to pass or decline this legislation will not dampen our commitment to our foundation's mission either way. But we believe our state elected officials have a moral and ethical obligation to do their part to protect our children in every way possible. We're doing our part as parents. It's now time for our leaders to do just that - lead.

When we go home tonight, there will still be an empty chair at the table, an empty bed upstairs, and an empty void in our souls. This bill, should it become law, will not fill any of that. And this bill, despite being named in his honor, is not just about Aidan. Today marks the 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the passing of Jesse Yeakle, the

precious son of Jean and Tim Yeakle, from Sudden Cardiac Arrest. Incredibly, Jean and Tim found out about today's efforts and chose to be here to honor Jesse. So this law is not just about Aidan. It's about Jesse, and Greg, and Louis, and Nicholas. But it's also about Blair and Dylan. And it's about Devin, and Quentin, and our little one we're expecting to join us in April. In totality, it's about all the children in this commonwealth with whom God has blessed us. Let's make sure we are **all** doing our part to ensure the safety of those entrusted to us. Thank you.