

Testimony in Support of HB 2562

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of HB 2562 as amended by the House Judiciary Committee. My name is Kevin Walker and I am regional vice president of advocacy for the American Heart Association.

Our mission is about saving lives and it is a mission we take very seriously. Although we've made tremendous strides in the number of lives we've saved we know that there is still a long way to go. For example, we know that the vast majority of cardiac arrests happen outside of the hospital setting – about 300,000 per year - but we also know that only 32 percent of cardiac arrest victims get CPR from a bystander. Encouraging bystanders to perform CPR is critical if we hope to have continued success with our mission. Our research has shown that a bystander performing hands only CPR in an emergency can more than double or triple a victim's chance of survival.

Unfortunately some bystanders are concerned about taking action because they fear legal repercussions. We have an opportunity to clarify the Kansas law through HB 2562 and send a clear message that bystanders should not be afraid to render aid in an emergency.

The current law is akin to putting a square peg in a round hole. We attempt to offer some protection but only if a person satisfies the definition of "health care provider." This is done, according to the statute, by taking a course in first aid. The ambiguity of this language raises numerous questions and none of the answers to those questions provides a clear answer. HB 2562 will remove the ambiguity and send a clear message to Kansans that rendering aid in emergency situations is encouraged and bring us line with 35 other states.

Research has given rise to easier techniques for performing quality CPR. Because of this we have been able to develop CPR training products geared directly to the lay public. Currently the American Heart Association is undertaking several different strategies to increase the number of lay person trained in CPR, and passage of this bill will coincide with our efforts and surely lead to increases in bystanders willing to perform CPR.

Thank you for your time. I welcome any questions you may have.