

Date of Hearing: June 23, 2026

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON ARTS, ENTERTAINMENT, SPORTS, AND TOURISM

Christopher M. Ward, Chair

ACR 221 (Garcia) – As Introduced June 3, 2026

SUBJECT: Sudden cardiac arrest: student athletes

SUMMARY: ACR 221 recognizes that sudden cardiac arrest is a critical issue facing student athletes and supports the important work nonprofit organizations are doing to raise awareness of sudden cardiac arrest, to increase preventative screenings, and to reduce the number of cases.

Specifically, **this resolution** makes the following legislative findings:

- 1) Sudden cardiac arrest is the leading cause of death for student athletes, with about 2,000 young people under 25 years of age dying each year in the United States.
- 2) Sports-related sudden cardiac arrest accounts for 5.4 percent of overall cases of sudden cardiac arrest in the pediatric population, and most cases occur during recreational or noncompetitive sports activity, with soccer and running being the most frequently involved sports.
- 3) According to the National Institutes of Health, the risk of sudden cardiac arrest in competitive athletes is significantly higher than in nonathletes, with male athletes nearly four times more likely to have an episode of sudden cardiac arrest than female athletes, and Black athletes nearly three times more likely than their White counterparts.
- 4) Survival disparities exist by race, with Black athletes showing lower survival rates than White, non-Hispanic athletes.
- 5) A two-year study of young athletes, between 11 and 27 years of age, from 2014 to 2016, identified 132 cases with an overall survival rate of 48 percent, and that survival rate was higher when a certified athletic trainer and an onsite automated external defibrillator (AED) were involved, at 83 percent and 89 percent, respectively.
- 6) According to a 2023 Scientific Session from the American Heart Association, sudden cardiac death (SCD) was the leading medical cause of death among NCAA athletes, comprising 13 percent of 1,102 total deaths, with male, Black, and Division 1 basketball players facing the highest risk; however, SCD incidence declined by 29 percent every five years over a 20-year study period, possibly due to improved CPR training, AED access, and emergency response planning.
- 7) With sudden cardiac arrest being caused by a wide range of cardiac diseases, early detection of heart issues and genetic testing can reduce risk factors of sudden cardiac death.
- 8) Annual physician examinations and sports preparticipation physician exams may miss about 85 to 90 percent of issues that may cause sudden cardiac arrest in youth.

- 9) The very low proportion of sports-related sudden cardiac arrest cases with warning symptoms strongly suggests that screening questionnaires reliant on symptoms alone are not an effective strategy for risk stratification in this age group.
- 10) Organizations, including, but not limited to, the Eric Paredes Save a Life Foundation, the Kyle J. Taylor Foundation, Who We Play For, Project ADAM, the California Youth Heart Coalition, the Saving Hearts Foundation, and Heartfelt Cardiac Projects, work toward increasing awareness about the prevalence of youth sudden cardiac arrest and increasing preventative youth heart screenings, as well as providing CPR trainings for youth communities.

FISCAL EFFECT: None. This measure is keyed nonfiscal by the Legislative Counsel.

COMMENTS:

- 1) Author's Statement. According to the author, "As a parent and lifelong educator, I believe that we must begin to recognize the seriousness of sudden cardiac arrest in our student athlete population. Recent studies have shown that Sudden Cardiac Arrest disorder is the leading cause of death in NCAA Division 1 Athletes, particularly impacting student athletes of color. Not only is this unacceptable, but through implementation of appropriate measures, it is entirely preventable. The best and cheapest medical care is one that is preventative. ACR 221 provides us that opportunity to engage with, encourage, and elevate the important work being done by nonprofit organizations committed to raising awareness of sudden cardiac arrest and increase access to preventative screenings, thereby reducing the number of fatal cases among our student athletes by identifying abnormal cardiac conditions before it is too late."

REGISTERED SUPPORT / OPPOSITION:

Support

None on file.

Opposition

None on file.

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