

Heidi Henninger  
Yarmouth  
LD 211

To members of the Education and Cultural Affairs Committee

My name is Dr Heidi Henninger and I have been a practicing neurologist, subspecializing in epilepsy for the past 23 years, recently retired and now consulting as an epilepsy expert. It has been my privilege to care for over 3500 individual patients with epilepsy living in our state. Of these, approximately 15% were school-aged children, many of whom are now grown and have children of their own. Sadly, not all of these children have survived into adulthood. Children with epilepsy have higher standard mortality rates compared to their peers without epilepsy, 3 - 7 per 1000 person-years, up to 15/1000 if the child had early-onset epilepsy, a 22 fold higher rate than their peers without epilepsy. Aside from the risk of death, students with epilepsy face stigma and have been arbitrarily banned from sports and dances and have been unnecessarily sent to the emergency room for stoppable seizures. The Safe School Act was legislation drafted by the Epilepsy Foundation of America, a leading advocacy voice supporting people with epilepsy and their families. As written, it will serve to reduce stigma and prevent unnecessary missed school time and expenses related to the use of emergency services. Seizure action plans are individualized plans developed by the student, their guardian, and their treating physician. The action plan defines the student's seizure type and may include instructions for administration, including self-administration when appropriate, of FDA-approved seizure rescue medications. These medications must be accessible with minimal delay or barriers, preferably kept by the student on his or her person if deemed appropriate by the physician. Delayed access to emergency medications can result in longer, more serious seizures that become harder to stop the longer they are allowed to continue. If implemented correctly, this law will save lives, remove barriers to academic achievement, and enable students with epilepsy to lead their best lives. The student who has introduced this bill is perhaps the best example of a young person leading their best life and I have no doubt that she will go on and make a difference in this state and beyond. Passing this bill will help other students achieve their best potential. Thank you.