



Students for Patient Advocacy Nationwide

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March 15, 2026

The Honorable Sharon Cooper, Chair
Georgia House Public and Community Health Committee
206 Washington St SW
Atlanta, GA 30334

Position Letter: Georgia H.B. 471 - Water Safety Education for New Parents - Support

Dear Chairman Cooper and members of the House Committee on Public and Community Health,

Students for Patient Advocacy Nationwide (SPAN) appreciates the intent of House Bill 471, which aims to implement rules and regulations requiring general hospitals and delivery centers to mandate a water safety education video for new parents before discharge. As an organization committed to advocating for patient welfare through healthcare policy, we recognize the importance of legislation that acknowledges public health and water safety education for infants through preventative action.

For the reasons that follow, SPAN strongly supports this bill and wishes for it to succeed.

Informed parents and guardians of newborn infants: Requiring labor and delivery units to provide videos and standardized form to parents regarding water safety precautions may reduce the risk that parents become uneducated. Accidental drownings can lead children to experience severe health consequences as a result of hypoxia, including seizure disorders, hypoxic-ischemic brain injury, and organ failure (CDC, 2026). Knowledgeable parents and guardians can take preventative measures to supervise their infants and recognize signs indicating possible drowning risk.

Potentially minimizing accidental child drownings: Over a dozen children aged one to four fatally drown within Georgia annually (WMAZ, 2025). Stronger water safety education standards will promote infant safety and information about safe water practices. Educated families will be equipped to appreciate the severity and frequency of childhood drownings and drowning-related medical conditions. Statewide water safety education will raise awareness about the prevalence of drowning, leading parents to understand the importance of intervention and ultimately reducing childhood water danger risks (GA HB471, 2026).

Formal definition of water safety education and safety plan development: Introducing and publicizing a water safety education definition to Georgia parents and guardians promotes consistency and equality in hospitals and delivery centers. Additionally, requiring creation of safety plans for swim instruction will enhance protocols in child water safety education. H.B. 471 acknowledges the importance of child aquatic safety and protection, while promoting structured approaches to bridging water awareness and competency throughout Georgia.

Considering the above, SPAN respectfully encourages Georgia's continuation of support for H.B. 471 to advance protective measures for child water safety education. Through requiring hospitals and labor and delivery centers to show new parents and guardians water safety instruction, H.B. 471 will continuously encourage informed families. By issuing formal definitions of water safety education and advancing water education plans, this bill reduces the risk of accidental drownings among infants in Georgia.



Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Abby Wildman". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long, sweeping underline.

Abby Wildman
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Students for Patient Advocacy Nationwide (SPAN)



References

1. CDC. "Risk Factors for Drowning." Drowning Prevention, 27 Jan. 2026, <https://www.cdc.gov/drowning/risk-factors/index.html>.
2. "Drowning Deaths Are a Leading Cause of Death for Infants. How These Infant Swim Lessons Are Trying to Help." WMAZ, 15 July 2025, <https://www.13wmaz.com/article/news/local/infant-swim-lessons-reduce-drowning-risk/93-ff71ac1c-93a9-454f-b1fe-e38a8229dadc>.
3. "GA - HB471." BillTrack50, <https://www.billtrack50.com/billdetail/1836932>.