



Students for Patient Advocacy Nationwide

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March 19, 2026

The Honorable Ben Watson, Chair
Health and Human Services Committee
325-A CLOB
Atlanta, GA 30334

Position Letter: Georgia H.B. 970 (Committee Substitute): Student Athlete Physical Examination and Cardiac Screening Act - Support

Dear Chairman Watson and members of the Health and Human Services Committee,

Students for Patient Advocacy Nationwide (SPAN) appreciates the intent of Georgia H.B. 970, which aims to implement standardized cardiovascular screenings before participation in athletics. As a youth-led organization committed to advancing equitable healthcare policy in order to improve the lives and promote early detection in young patients, we recognize the importance of legislation that addresses preventable cardiac arrest among youth athletes.

Sudden cardiac arrest is widely recognized as one of the leading causes of death in young athletes with estimates varying between 1 in 50,000 to 1 in 80,000 athletes per year [[MayoClinic](#)], and the cause of 56% of deaths in student athletes [[AHAJournals](#)]. Importantly, many of these events occur in individuals who appear asymptomatic, underscoring the challenge of identifying risk without structured screening.

For the reasons listed below, we strongly support this bill and wish for it to succeed.

- **Standardized Approach:** By establishing a more uniform approach to pre-participation cardiovascular screenings and increasing the availability of qualified medical professionals, the bill takes a proactive step toward preventing these lethal, avoidable medical emergencies in student athletics; in emphasizing early identification and awareness, it creates a framework that supports informed decision-making and safer athletic participation for all students.
- **Improved pre-participation evaluations:** Research supports the use of standardized history and physical examination tools to identify warning signs of cardiovascular disease in athletes, which can help determine which students require further specialist evaluation. This approach reflects current recommendations that prioritize targeted screening over inconsistent or informal clearance processes.
- **Expands access to screenings:** The bill also improves equity in access to care by expanding opportunities for student athletes to obtain required physical examinations from qualified medical professionals. Many families face barriers such as cost, transportation, and limited appointment availability, which can delay or prevent timely sports clearance. By broadening access points, the legislation helps reduce these disparities and supports more consistent participation in school athletics. Evidence from healthcare access research shows that cost and scheduling barriers can significantly reduce the reliability and completeness of preventive care for patients in underserved communities.

By standardizing and strengthening pre-participation health requirements, H.B. 970 promotes a more proactive and equitable approach to student athlete safety and helps reduce the likelihood of preventable tragedies.



SPAN commends the sponsors of this legislation and respectfully urges the committee to advance H.B. 970. This bill represents a meaningful step toward protecting student athletes and strengthening public health safeguards in school athletics.

Thank you for your leadership and your commitment to the health and safety of Georgia's students.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sara Gholami". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Sara" and last name "Gholami" clearly distinguishable.

Sara Gholami
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Students for Patient Advocacy Nationwide (SPAN)