

Opinion: Alaska students are being left out of lifesaving education

By Heather Cavanaugh

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Forty states, the District of Columbia and many school districts nationwide already provide students with lifesaving CPR education before high school graduation. Alaska is not among them. [Senate Bill 20](#) is moving through the Alaska Legislature and would change that. Passing it this legislative session is essential.

Knowing how to perform CPR is a critical life skill we should all know. When someone suffers cardiac arrest, immediate CPR and use of an automated external defibrillator, or AED, can [double or triple the chance of survival](#). It can be the difference between life and death. I know this firsthand.

While visiting Hawaii last year, my young and healthy husband experienced cardiac arrest while we were out on a run. I did not know CPR. Thankfully, someone nearby jumped into action and began CPR compressions. When the ambulance arrived eight minutes later, they used an AED to shock his heart back into normal rhythm. Chris survived. And I immediately became certified in CPR.

About [70% of cardiac arrests](#) outside of a hospital happen at home. Many people [are not prepared](#) to respond to a cardiac arrest emergency. I certainly wasn't. Teaching CPR in school will fill our communities with lifesavers – those trained to give the immediate help needed to someone experiencing cardiac arrest until emergency services arrive. In Alaska, where emergency response times can be longer due to distance and geography, this is especially critical.

Schools prepare young people with the knowledge and skills they need for adulthood. CPR should be part of that. Giving students Hands-Only CPR education will ensure more Alaskans are ready to take immediate, lifesaving action when every second matters. Senate Bill 20 offers a simple, proven way to save lives.

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