

Mr. Roberto J. Alonso, Board Member

Co-Sponsors: Ms. Maria Teresa Rojas, Chair
Ms. Monica Colucci, Vice Chair
Mr. Danny Espino
Dr. Steve Gallon III
Mr. Joseph S. Geller
Ms. Luisa Santos

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SUBJECT: MANDATORY MEDICAL EVALUATION AND ELECTROCARDIOGRAM (ECG/EKG) SCREENINGS FOR STUDENT-ATHLETES

COMMITTEE: PERSONNEL, STUDENT, SCHOOL & COMMUNITY SUPPORT

LINK TO STRATEGIC PLAN: INFORMED, ENGAGED, & EMPOWERED STAKEHOLDERS

Sudden cardiac arrest stands as the leading cause of death among student-athletes, with an alarming 350,000 sudden cardiac deaths occurring annually in the United States. Research has shown that Electrocardiogram (ECG/EKG) screenings are highly effective in detecting underlying heart conditions that could lead to sudden cardiac arrest. ECG/EKG tests are vital in identifying heart abnormalities by measuring the electrical activity of the heart. These screenings provide invaluable insights into the strength, speed, rhythm, and frequency of heartbeats, crucial for early detection and prevention. By adopting this screening requirement, Miami-Dade County Public Schools (M-DCPS) would not only align its practices with best practices in student health and safety but also reinforce its unwavering commitment to safeguarding the well-being of all student-athletes.

The safety and well-being of student-athletes is a top priority for Miami-Dade County Public Schools (M-DCPS). In the past two years, the district School Board has introduced a series of board initiatives aimed at strengthening the medical supervision of student-athletes, including:

- H-8 (June 2023): Electrocardiogram (ECG/EKG) Screenings for Student-Athletes – Highlighting the role of ECG/EKG assessments in identifying heart abnormalities and reducing the risk of sudden cardiac arrest.
- H-8 (September 2023): Fire Rescue at Sports Events – Advocating for the presence of emergency medical personnel at high-impact sporting events.
- H-13 (October 2024): Medical Services Evaluation at High-Impact Sporting Events for Student Safety – Further evaluating medical response services at school sports events.
- H-13 (February 2025): Recognizing American Heart Month: Expanding Preventative Care Through Community Health Fairs – Promoting heart health awareness and preventative measures.

Despite these efforts, sudden cardiac arrest continues to claim the lives of student-athletes across the country. Based on news reports, nine student-athletes have already lost their lives

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this year due to undetected heart conditions. Just last week, a grieving mother shared her tragic loss due to sudden cardiac arrest—an event that could have been prevented through early detection with a simple ECG/EKG screening.

M-DCPS has taken critical steps toward student-athlete safety, including its partnership with Nicklaus Children’s Hospital and Project ADAM to implement the “Heart Safe School” program, training school staff to respond to cardiac emergencies. As of today, 173 school sites have been certified as Heart Safe, with a goal of expanding district-wide certification. Additionally, since October 2022, Nicklaus Children’s Hospital has screened approximately 7,000 students, underscoring the need for continued and expanded cardiac screenings.

Moreover, Senate Bill 1070 (“Second Chance Act”) has been introduced during this current Legislative Session, and it seeks to amend Florida Statutes to require certain students to pass an ECG/EKG along with the standard medical evaluation (physical) prior to competing in Florida High School Athletic Association (FHSAA) interscholastic sports events. SB 1070 would also include provisions related to parental objections to an ECG/EKG and a release from liability.

To further protect student-athletes and prevent unnecessary loss of life, this item proposes that, effective Summer 2025, all student-athletes be required to undergo one successful ECG/EKG screening before participating in athletics, followed by an annual medical evaluation to maintain eligibility. As part of this proposed initiative:

- Students must satisfactorily pass an ECG/EKG screening once before being cleared for participation in athletics.
- A medical evaluation must be conducted annually to ensure continued eligibility.
- Parents may object in writing based on religious tenets or practices.
- A physician licensed in the state of Florida may also provide a written statement indicating that a student does not require an ECG/EKG screening.

This Board item requests that the Superintendent, in consultation with the Greater Miami Athletic Conference, determine the feasibility of developing and implementing a policy requiring all high school student-athletes to undergo a one-time ECG/EKG screening before participating in athletics, with the policy set to take effect by Summer 2025. Additionally, the policy would mandate an annual medical evaluation for all student-athletes to maintain their eligibility. A detailed implementation timeline and process should be provided to ensure compliance with these new requirements. Furthermore, efforts should be made to explore funding opportunities, such as grants and sponsorships, to support this initiative.

This item has been reviewed and approved by the Office of the General Counsel as to form and legal sufficiency.

**ACTION PROPOSED BY
MR. ROBERTO J. ALONSO:**

That The School Board of Miami-Dade County, Florida, direct the Superintendent of Schools to:

1. Explore the feasibility of developing and implementing policies and procedures requiring all high school student-athletes to undergo a one-time ECG/EKG screening before participating in interscholastic athletic activities, with the policy to take effect by Summer 2025;
2. Enhance and continue to develop partnerships with local healthcare providers, hospitals, and nonprofit organizations to offer ECG/EKG screenings at low or no cost to families;
3. Report findings concerning options for process, procedure and/or policy for ECG/EKG screenings for the student-athletes to the Board at the June 11, 2025, Personnel, Student, School & Community Support Committee Meeting; and;
4. Initiate rulemaking, if appropriate, by the June 18, 2025, regular School Board meeting.