TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT FOR H.683 AND S.335
AN ACT IMPROVING STUDENTS’ ACCESS TO LIFE SAVING TREATMENTS
BEFORE THE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION
MAY 20, 2021

The Massachusetts Medical Society (MMS) wishes to be recorded in strong support of H.683 and S.335, An Act Improving Students Access to Life Saving Treatments. We thank Representative Ted Philips and Senator Barry Finegold for sponsoring these important pieces of legislation.

H.683 and S.335 are identical bills that would address the need for others to help students with diabetes by administering an injection of glucagon in an emergency situation. Students with diabetes may suffer from hypoglycemia as a result of exercise and too little food or an overdose of insulin. In extreme cases, hypoglycemia may result in seizures or a coma. In Massachusetts schools, currently only school nurses are permitted to administer glucagon. But in some settings such as school trips or athletic events, a nurse may not be available. If passed, these bills would allow trained non-medical personnel to administer glucagon to a student in an emergency situation.

Diabetes is a disease that results in high blood glucose levels. Insulin is used to lower blood sugar. Glucagon is used in cases of severe hypoglycemia where the child is incapacitated and can't consume food or drink to raise their blood glucose. Most young people with diabetes are acutely aware of their blood sugar levels and routinely self-administer insulin. Unfortunately, for them, it is a part of their everyday life. However, because fainting, seizure or death could occur, it is important to allow the administration of glucagon by a member of the school staff when the nurse or other school staff is not present and the student exhibits symptoms of severe hypoglycemia.

There is a long list of medical/diabetes organizations that support this, including the American Diabetes Association, the American Association of Clinical Endocrinologists, and the American Academy of Pediatrics. 41 states permit non-medical staff in schools to be trained should the school nurse not be available, including California, Virginia and Wisconsin, and our neighboring states of Rhode Island, Connecticut, New York, New Hampshire, and Maine. Based on information from these states, the MMS is not aware of any adverse events due to the passage of this bill.

The MMS thanks the Committee on Education for their consideration of this important piece of legislation for young people with diabetes and their parents. We urge the Committee to report the bill out favorably in a timely manner.