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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Legislation Introduced During National Heart Month Protects Youth Athletes from Cardiac Arrest

Children's Cardiomyopathy Foundation Partners with Senator Robert Menendez and Representative Bill Pascrell on new comprehensive sports bill

TENAFLY, N.J.—February 27, 2020— In preparation for the start of the spring athletic season in schools across the U.S., legislators are focusing on sports safety, especially the risks associated with concussions, cardiac arrest, and heat illness among youth. The Children's Cardiomyopathy Foundation (CCF) is taking a leadership role in working with U.S. Senator Robert Menendez (D-NJ) and Representative Bill Pascrell (NJ-09) on the *Supporting Athletes, Families, and Educators to Protect the Lives of Athletic Youth* (SAFE PLAY) Act. The bill, which was introduced today during National Heart Month, includes important provisions on protecting young athletes from sports medical emergencies, including sudden cardiac arrest, which is commonly associated with cardiomyopathy.

According to a 2019 study by the National Athletic Trainer's Association, 75% of sports-related deaths in youth are cardiac-related, and the majority of incidents occur during practice. Cardiomyopathy, a disease of the heart muscle, is a leading cause of sudden cardiac arrest in youth. Symptoms are not always present, and undiagnosed children may be at an increased risk of a cardiac event. However, premature deaths can be prevented if children with an underlying heart condition are identified earlier.

The SAFE PLAY Act focuses on various sports safety issues, such as heat exposure, CPR and AED training, concussion response, and energy drink consumption. It also encourages best practices on preventing, documenting, and addressing cardiac emergencies, and includes provisions for educating parents, schools, and health professionals about higher-risk heart conditions such as cardiomyopathy. The bill requires the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to develop and disseminate educational resources to encourage families to evaluate their cardiac health history, check for cardiomyopathy symptoms, and seek medical screening if necessary. Additionally, the CDC would provide national data on how many student athletes are impacted by cardiomyopathy and other cardiac conditions, concussions, and heat-related illnesses. The bill also will provide grants to states for cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) training and automatic external defibrillators (AEDs) in public schools, as well as set guidelines for emergency preparedness in case of an adverse cardiac event.

"I am grateful we have congressional champions like Senator Menendez and Representative Pascrell who are taking the necessary steps to prevent unnecessary deaths on the playing field," says Lisa Yue, CCF's founding executive director. "The SAFE PLAY Act includes both primary and secondary prevention measures, which can help reduce the number of fatalities from cardiac arrests." Proper diagnosis and early treatment for children with cardiomyopathy are priorities for Ms. Yue, who lost two young children to the disease.

"Athletics are a key part of childhood and we want our children to participate in sports, compete, play and have fun, but we also want them to be safe. Young athletes and their parents must be assured that there are properly trained coaches, teachers, trainers and other personnel on the sidelines who are ready and equipped to respond to a cardiac event or other health emergency," said Sen. Menendez. "Our SAFE PLAY Act will protect our kids and save lives by ensuring our schools have the resources and information they need to properly identify warning signs and respond in the event of a medical emergency during a game."

"Cardiac arrest, concussions, and heat exhaustion are just three of the many threats to our young athletes. It is on all of us to protect their health, and I am proud to introduce this legislation today to do exactly that," said Rep. Pascrell. "Our SAFE PLAY Act will help ensure that coaches, trainers, parents, and athletes are equipped with the resources they need to help treat and prevent sports-related injuries and emergencies."

For parents who have experienced sudden cardiac arrest firsthand, emergency preparedness is key. Brian Leary, whose son Tyler had a cardiac arrest, supports the SAFEPLAY Act. "Fortunately, Tyler made a full recovery from the incident. This could be attributed to state legislation that required an AED on school premise and school personal who were trained in CPR and were able to act quickly to save his life," states Leary.

Throughout February during National Heart Month, CCF is encouraging the public to learn more about cardiomyopathy and get involved in raising awareness of the disease in their community. For more information, visit www.childrenscardiomyopathy.org or follow CCF on Facebook and Twitter @CCFheartkids.

About the Children's Cardiomyopathy Foundation

The Children's Cardiomyopathy Foundation (CCF) is a national organization focused on finding causes and cures for all pediatric forms of cardiomyopathy. The Foundation was established in 2002 to accelerate research and education, increase public awareness and advocacy, and offer support services to affected families. Since then, CCF has grown into a global community of families, physicians and scientists, raising \$15 million in support of its mission.