

Lobbying Your Legislator: Getting Started

What is Lobbying?

Lobbying is an attempt to influence specific legislation through direct or grassroots communications with legislators or their staff.

Examples of Lobbying:

E-mailing, calling or meeting your legislator, testifying at a public hearing or submitting written testimony, and writing a letter to the editor or op-ed for the local newspaper.

Finding your legislator(s): <https://malegislature.gov/Search/FindMyLegislator>

Talking With Your Legislator: Tips for Success

1. **Introduce Yourself:** Legislators are people too, with previous careers! They also have hobbies and live in your district; do they frequent the same park or restaurants you do? Use this time to make small talk and connections they will remember you for.

2. **Where Do They Stand?** Time to gauge their support of this bill: If they are not a co-sponsor, do they know about this bill and do they support or oppose it? Use this time to assess their knowledge and take time to explain the legislation, if needed.

Note: You don't have to be an expert. It's okay to say "I'm not sure about that, I will follow-up with more information via e-mail within the week". Email NASW-MA and we can help you with finding information to answer their questions!

3. **Make It Personal:** Why do you care about this bill? What was it about this particular bill that drew you to making an appointment to talk about it? Use that passion and interest when speaking to your legislators. Use examples from real life if you have them!

4. **The Ask:** Now that you know where they stand with the bill, it's time to make your ask; what is it you want them to do; to co-sponsor? to vote in support or opposition? To ask the House Speaker or Senate President to bring the bill to the floor for a vote? If they already support it, ask them what you can do as a constituent to help and thank them for their support.

5. **Follow-Up:** Always thank your legislator or aide for meeting with you; it's time out of their day too! If you promised any follow-up information or facts, be sure to e-mail it within the timeline you gave them. Were they unsure about your ask? *Follow-up with the legislator's office within a week asking if they have made a decision or if they need more information to do so.*

Above all else remember this: you as a constituent hold a very important power. You and your influence can determine whether that legislator gets (and stays) elected.