

# How to Advocate at the State Level for Your Age Friendly Priorities

Stay active at the state level by using the tips described below. You don't have to advocate during every legislative session, just when your priorities are on the agenda. The legislature follows a calendar schedule. Below are some suggestions for what to do and when.

## Between June and August, You Can Stay Connected

Ask how you can maintain relationships with your legislators. The best time to build a relationship with your legislator is before you need one, so invite your legislators for coffee or ask them to attend an age friendly meeting or event.

## Between September and November, You Can Plan Ahead

Ask what advocacy goals you are working on this year. Has any statewide legislation been proposed that aligns with your goals? You can collaborate with other age friendly communities. Find out who is working on similar initiatives or backing the same legislation and add your voice to theirs. One community asking for change is easy to ignore. Ten communities asking together is not. Connect with others working on the same goals or legislation and advocate together.

## During the Session (December to April in even-numbered years; December to June in odd-numbered years) You Can Make Your Voices Heard

Ask who you want to reach during the session. What message or story do you want to share? This is when decisions get made and your story can tip the balance. Contact your legislators about bills that matter to your community or invite colleagues and community members with first-hand experience to testify.

## After the Session You Can Reflect and Respond

What happened during the session? What is worth celebrating and what should be carried forward? Now is the time to close the loop with your legislators, your partners, and your community. Share what passed and what it means for your community. Celebrate your wins publicly, even small ones because they build credibility and keep volunteers engaged. Name the goals that weren't achieved so you can start advocating early to keep them moving forward.

## What to Do If You Plan To Testify

If you plan to testify before a legislative committee, do your homework. Read the full bill and its fiscal note. Research the committee and know where proponents and opponents stand. Identify your ask, for example whether you support, oppose, or want to amend the bill, and state it clearly. Then practice saying it out loud. Written testimony should stay under two pages, and oral testimony typically runs 2 to 3 minutes, though committee members may interrupt or ask questions, so stay flexible. Preparation is what turns a good story into a persuasive argument. Brevity is what makes it land.

## How to Begin: You Should Begin With An Introduction

Who are you, who do you represent, and what is your position on the bill? Then you should tell a story: What story from your own life or work brings this issue to life? Talk about the impact this bill would have if it passed: How will this bill impact your community? What numbers or examples back that up?

## How Can I Contact Key Maine State Advocacy Leaders?

AARP Maine, Noël Bonam, [E-mail address for Noël Bonam](#)

Cabinet on Aging, Elizabeth Gattine, [E-mail address for Elizabeth Gattine](#)

Maine Council on Aging/Caucus on Aging, Jess Fay, [E-mail address for Jess Fay](#)