



You and your concerns matter - Engage your voice - Share your story

TIPS ON TALKING TO YOUR LEGISLATOR - Below are some tips on how you can increase your effectiveness when communicating with legislators.

Each person will be seated at a table with a legislator. Each table will have a moderator whose job is to ensure that everyone gets a chance to speak.

- **State your specific concern**

- why is this important
- how does this affect the legislator's constituents
- what data do you have to support your case
- briefly share a relevant personal or client story (struggle or success story)
- ask for support, action
- state appreciation for listening to your concern

Example: I'm John, and I'm a volunteer at my local food pantry. Mason Square in Springfield has higher rates of hunger and food insecurity than the national average—19% of households are food-insecure. The majority of our clients are families with children, and they rely on our food pantry to feed their children. Our clients need to see an increase in funding for emergency food assistance in this year's budget. Thank you for listening to your Mason Square constituents about this issue.

- **Advocate for a specific bill** (note bill number, budget line item)

- why is this important
- how does this affect the legislator's constituents
- include your personal or client experience
- ask for support, specific action on bill/line item
- offer additional information
- state appreciation for listening to your concern

Example: My name is Nancy, from The Food Bank of Western Massachusetts. Last year, our network of 200 member agencies distributed nearly 10 million lbs of food to over 211,000 people in our region. The Massachusetts Emergency Food Assistance Program (MEFAP, budget line item 2511-0105) is an important source of food for the pantries and meal sites we work with. This year, we'd like to ask for your support to increase MEFAP funding by \$3 million, from \$17 million to \$20 million. Thank you for your continuing support for serving our neighbors in need.

Other helpful hints:

- Be Personal - connect your talking points to your story (how has the state support impacted you, your family, your clients, your community).
- Bring supporting information - a business card, brochure, fact sheets, flyers for upcoming events, or one-page document that lists the key information about the issue that is important to you.
- Know the basics about legislation affecting your issue. Visit www.malegislature.gov to search for bills filed this session. If there isn't any specific legislation, be able to clearly articulate your concern.
- Provide Data – when possible provide data that will support your point of view. Brief, district-specific data is best—select one key piece of data that helps sell your point of view. You can always provide them a short brief on your topic with additional information.
- Stay Focused- Remember there will be others at the table and you only have a few minutes to share so stay on topic. Also, don't let the legislator change the subject either. Be polite, but be firm.

Before coming to the Legislative Reception, craft your own “ask,” and practice it. Your legislator will appreciate your preparedness.
