OSAH-MN Advocacy Toolkit: Meeting with Members of Congress

Updated 03.01.23

Scheduling tips: What do you need before scheduling a meeting with a lawmaker?

- Contact info for scheduler- it is better to email them, but you can also try calling the Member's office.
    - You may need to follow up on your email or call. Don't get frustrated! They are busy and receive a lot of messages. Be patient and wait a week between follow ups.
- Include the purpose of the meeting, including issue and bill number if the meeting will include a specific ask or discussion of introduced legislation
- List of who will attend meeting; prioritize people who live in the Congressional District

Prepare for meeting

- Get to know your Member of Congress (do your research- what committees they sit on, what issues they are interested in, what legislation about your topic they have co-sponsored in the past; look up staff on Linked-in)
- Identify a meeting facilitator- preferably a constituent
- Prepare an agenda- you will likely only have twenty minutes maximum for the meeting, so stay on message
- Practice and assign roles before the meeting

The Meeting

- Sample agenda
    - Try to focus on just one issue to ensure attention to that issue
- Thank your MOC
- Share stories
- Have time for your MOC to offer feedback
- Have an "ask." Be as specific as possible, such as asking for support for a particular bill.

Post-Meeting

- Send a thank you- both to the staff you met with and the scheduler
    - Can reiterate any commitments to "the ask" made by a MOC.
- Send any follow up resources

Current opportunities for housing advocacy in Congress (August 2021):

The "Ask" (Suggestions of bills and issues to raise)

- Educate Members of Congress about the importance of federal affordable housing and homelessness investments and why dramatic cuts to these investments will harm your communities and neighbors. Here is NLIHC's Congressional Recess Toolkit.
- **FY2024 Appropriations:** Advocate for important programs and issues - See NLIHC's Advancing Housing Justice in the 118's Congress:
    - Expand and preserve the supply of affordable homes
        - Support the Housing Trust Fund
        - MN Fact sheets - impact of Low Income Housing Tax Credit
    - Bridge the gap between income and housing cost: Rental Assistance
    - Provide emergency rental assistance: Bills introduced in 117th Congress.
    - Prevent homelessness
- **Farm Bill**: The farm bill is due for reauthorization this year. The farm bill include USDA's Rural Housing Services.

Note: A meeting that includes an ask for action on an active bill would be considered a "lobbying" meeting. Nonprofits can lobby, but there are important rules governing this activity. For more information go to: https://bolderadvocacy.org/

Resources for setting meetings:

- Minnesota Members of Congress websites and Minnesota Members of 118th Congress (PowerPoint)
- Contact list: Schedulers and housing staff for Minnesota MOC
- Sample email meeting request
- Sample meeting agenda
- Testimony Tips by Linda Sodersrom
- Good general resource on federal advocacy for nonprofits: https://results.org/resources/meet-face-to-face-with-your-member-of-congress/

Information about housing issues in Minnesota

- MHP: Key Facts on Housing 2022
- Minnesota Homeless Mortality Report
- Eviction Lab: Minnesota Eviction Tracking
- For detailed information about federal programs, see NLIHC's 2023 Advocates Guide.