

2021 MEDICAL STUDENT ADVOCACY CONFERENCE

Advocacy 101 tips and action plan

Created by the AMA Medical Student Section Committee on Legislation and Advocacy

How to be an effective advocate before/during/after Hill visits

- **Know the issues and who will speak on them.** Go in with a plan on who in the group will speak/advocate for each specific policy to be efficient and avoid talking over each other. Consider assigning a leader to call on certain individuals.
- **Develop an “elevator speech.”** Aim for 30 seconds to one minute to keep your audience attentive. Be sure to practice with a timer.
- **Personal sentiments/anecdotes are essential.** Lawmakers share those stories with their constituents. Anecdotes about patients are more powerful than statistics, and medical students have a unique perspective to offer.
- **Do your research.** Know what issues your representative/senator is active on and where they stand. For example, how have they voted in the past? Are they a co-signer on a bill that is being introduced/reintroduced? Share some gratitude if the representative has previously acted on important policy issues or supports the American Medical Association’s legislative priorities.
- **Connect to your audience** by finding shared values. You may disagree with a lawmaker’s previous voting history, but you can spin a policy issue in a unique way to find common ground.
- **Ask for feedback.** At the end of a meeting, it is okay to ask whether the issues you raised are ones that the legislator/staffer can see themselves working on. You will generally receive an honest answer. Also, always ask if they have any unanswered questions.
- **Follow up after the meeting.** Ask the staff member you meet with for their contact information and send a thank you email after your meeting. Always share your gratitude and continue to apply social pressure. It takes time to get meaningful results in government.
 - Also, make sure to ask the member of Congress or their staff how you can best deliver the 2021 medical student advocacy conference leave behind to them. **You can find this leave behind document in your action kit!**
- **Stay involved.** After your legislative meeting, consider sharing your policy passions via social media or by publishing an op-ed.

Schedule your own meeting

- Unable to make the congressional meeting? Schedule one on your own time as a constituent by visiting your lawmaker’s website and calling or emailing their office with your request.
 - You can find your federal district representative by entering your zip code [here](#).
 - You can find your two federal senators [here](#).
 - When attempting to schedule a meeting, be polite, yet persistent.
- Your action plan:
 - Know the issue.
 - Provide the facts and present a personal story to the representative/senator.
 - Confirm the lawmaker’s position.
 - Drop a leave behind with the message/ask to the lawmaker on next steps.

Helpful tips to run a smooth virtual meeting

- Meet as a group in advance to discuss who will introduce the group and speak on which issues, and brainstorm questions you wish to ask during the meeting.
- Join Zoom rooms five minutes early to allow further time for strategizing the flow of the visit if logistically possible.
- Legislators and staffers are frequently running behind schedule. Show up early for the meeting, but don't be surprised if they are a few minutes late.
- Keep your video on, if possible with bandwidth availability, to personalize the meeting.
- Understand that it will not be possible for every student to talk during the meeting.
- Take a "group photo" screenshot at the end of the virtual meeting and include it with a summary of the meeting when you follow up, but make sure to ask the legislator or staffer if they are okay with it!
 - If you post the photo on social media, be sure to tag the representative you met with!

Get involved!

- The Committee on Legislation and Advocacy is an AMA Medical Student Section (MSS) standing committee dedicated to educating the AMA-MSS on AMA policy priorities and encouraging related advocacy opportunities. The committee is comprised of three subcommittees—advocacy and engagement; legislation; and policy, development and education—that work on a variety of projects.
- The Committee on Legislation and Advocacy prepares a monthly newsletter that breaks down current and important topics in health policy and features an AMA-MSS advocate of the month. Committee members create educational programming for AMA-MSS meetings; form relationships with region and chapter leaders to support local, state and federal advocacy efforts; and provide expertise and content creation for the AMA Medical Student Advocacy Conference and National Advocacy Week.
- Students can apply for an AMA-MSS standing committee twice a year: in June for a one-year term and in December for a six-month term. You can read more about each standing committee [here](#) and submit your application now!