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!