



Advocacy Action Plan Checklist

Created by the AMA-MSS Committee on Legislation and Advocacy (COLA)

How to be an effective advocate before, during and after Hill visits

- **Know the issues and who will speak on them.** Meet as a group in advance to discuss who will introduce the group, who will speak on which issues, and brainstorm questions you wish to ask during the meeting. (Understand it may not be possible for every student to talk during each meeting.)
- **Develop an “elevator speech.”** Summarize your talking points in 30 seconds to 1 minute to keep your audience attentive and practice with a timer.
- **Personal sentiments/anecdotes are essential.** Lawmakers share those stories with their constituents. Emotions and stories about patients are more powerful than statistics when communicating with legislators. Medical students have a unique lens that we can share with them. Anticipate questions from your representative/senator and prepare researched answers.
- **Do your research.** Know what issues your representative/senator is active on, and where they stand on the issues. How have they voted in the past? Share some gratitude if the representative/senator has previously acted on policy issues or supports the American Medical Association’s legislative priorities.
 - If this is a bill being reintroduced, was your representative/senator previously a co-signer?
- **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 perspective.
 - Reiterate your ask by reminding your legislator/staffer what you would like them to do at the close of the meeting. Would you like them to introduce, co-sponsor, or support a specific bill?
- **Ask for feedback.** At the end of a meeting, it is okay to ask whether this issue is something that the legislator/staffer can see themselves working on. Staffers will generally be honest with you. Also, always ask if they have any unanswered questions.
 - Share a leave behind with the message/ask to the lawmaker on next steps.
- **Request a group photo.** With the permission of the legislator or staffer, request a photo at the end of the meeting. If you post the photo on social media, be sure to tag the representative you met with!
- **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.
- **Let us know how your visit went.** Fill out a Hill Visit Feedback Form at physiciansgrassrootsnetwork.org/hillvisit. This information is valuable in providing follow-up communication to congressional offices and maximizes our advocacy efforts on behalf of the AMA. It also lets us know if there are any questions that were asked in the visit that staff can follow-up on with the office.
- **Stay involved.** After your legislative meeting, consider sharing your policy passions via social media or by publishing an op-ed.

Make a lasting impact beyond this visit

Build a relationship. Rarely does a single meeting change someone's mind or convince them to take action. Continue meeting with your Representatives and Senators in your district back home and in subsequent trips to Washington, DC. Schedule one on your own time as a constituent by visiting your Member of Congress' website and calling or emailing their office with your request.

- Locate your Federal District Representative by entering your Zip Code [here](#).
- Locate your two federal Senators [here](#).
- When attempting to schedule a meeting, be polite, yet persistent.

Your action plan:

1. Know the issues.
2. Provide the facts and present a personal story to your representative/senator.
3. Confirm your lawmaker's position.
4. Share a leave behind with the message/ask to the lawmaker on next steps.

Get Involved with COLA!

The Committee on Legislation and Advocacy (COLA) is a Medical Student Section (MSS) Standing Committee dedicated to educating the 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. Committee members create educational programming for 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 Medical Student Advocacy Conference (MAC) and the Advocacy in Action Workshop series.

Students can apply for an AMA-MSS Standing Committee twice a year - in June for a one-year term and in December for a 6-month term. You can read more about each Standing Committee [here](#) and submit your application now!