

## TIPS FOR SPEAKING WITH YOUR LEGISLATOR

*Your goal is to develop an ongoing personal relationship with your elected representatives, as well as to influence their position on afterschool programming and funding. Here are a few general things to keep in mind when speaking with legislators.*

- Know who your legislator is before making initial contact on an issue. To identify your senator and/or representative, <https://www.gis.leg.mn/iMaps/districts/>
- Do not be intimidated. Legislators will view you as the expert on the issue.
- Personal stories can be one of the most impactful ways to make your point. If you are comfortable, you should feel free to share your personal stories.
- Do not assume that your legislator knows about your work and its impact on students.
- Take the time to educate him/her. Do not use jargon.
- Know your issue. Provide facts and figures to back up your position. Refer to the key messages and other materials in the advocacy kit.
- Remember: all causes are good causes and everyone thinks their issue is the most important. You must convince your legislator that there is something extra special about yours.
- Don't debate with a legislator or give ultimatums such as "I won't vote for you if you do not support my position." Respect the legislator's right to disagree with you.
- Put the legislator at ease by convincing him/her that you are there to serve as a resource.
- Be a partner, not an adversary.
- Put broad policy issues in a local perspective. Legislators who know how issues will impact local voters tend to grasp ideas more easily and are generally more receptive.
- Be a good listener. Hear what your legislator has to say on the issue.
- Be sure to thank the legislator for taking the time to hear your position.
- Once a legislator gives you a commitment, it is appropriate to check back with him/her later. However, do not badger him/her with excessive phone calls.
- Do not be disappointed if your legislator sends an aide. Aides are critical to the process.
- Be brief, prepared, clear, honest, accurate, persuasive, timely, persistent, and grateful.