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/](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.