



LUTHERAN SOCIAL SERVICE OF MINNESOTA

Legislative Advocacy Toolkit



Table of Contents

<u>I. Learn About Legislative Advocacy</u>	3
<u>What is advocacy?</u>	3
<u>Why advocate?</u>	3
<u>What is the legislative session?</u>	3
<u>When is the legislative session?</u>	4
<u>Attend LSS' Legislative Advocacy 101 training</u>	4
<u>II. Find Your Legislators and Their Contact Information</u>	4
<u>III. Advocate to Your Legislator</u>	5
<u>By phone</u>	5
<u>By email or mail</u>	6
<u>By meeting with them</u>	7
<u>By testifying</u>	9
<u>IV. Track the Legislation You're Advocating For</u>	10
<u>V. Stay Updated & Advocate with LSS!</u>	10
<u>VI. References</u>	11

LSS ADVOCACY OFFICE

The LSS Advocacy Office engages employees and supporters in advocacy by promoting civic engagement, building relationships with policymakers, and advocating on state and federal levels in support of LSS' mission and public policy priorities.

Key LSS Advocacy activities include:

- Developing and passing public policy priorities at the state level.
- Building the capacity of employees, people served and supported by LSS, and community members to advocate.
- Engaging LSS stakeholders in the political process, including nonpartisan voter engagement and outreach.
- Working in coalition with community partners to advance public policy.
- Partnering with national associations to monitor and advocate on federal policies that impact LSS.



LEARN ABOUT LEGISLATIVE ADVOCACY

What is advocacy?

Advocacy: to speak or write in favor of; support or urge by argument, recommend publicly. (1)

Advocate: a person who publicly supports or recommends a particular cause or policy (1)

“Advocacy influences public policy by providing a conduit for individuals and organizations to voice an opinion.” - National Council on Aging (2)

Advocacy practice can focus on changing policies to bring more resources and opportunities to groups with less power and resources.

Why advocate?

Decisions made by elected officials impact our work, our communities and the lives of the people we support – children, youth and families; people with disabilities; and older adults. Legislators want to hear from you about the issues you care about. Your voice, story, and expertise are powerful and integral to our advocacy success.

What is the legislative session?

The legislative session is a time for House and Senate members to discuss, write, and pass laws. To learn more about how an idea becomes a law in Minnesota, visit

<https://www.sos.state.mn.us/about-minnesota/minnesota-government/passing-laws-in-minnesota/>

When is the legislative session?

The Minnesota legislature is only required to meet at least once every two years. However, the legislature typically meets every year.

In **odd-numbered** years, the legislature is focused on budget setting for the next two years. In **even-numbered** years, the legislature is more focused on policy related legislation rather than budget, since the budget has been set the prior session.

Each year, the legislative session must adjourn by the first Monday after the third Saturday of May. When urgent decisions need to be made outside of the legislative session, the governor can call a "special session."

Attend LSS' Legislative Advocacy 101 training

We encourage community members, social workers, and other social services providers to attend this in-depth training about the legislative process. Attendees will also hear from experts and leave with the skills and confidence they need to successfully advocate on the issues they care about.
















To find out upcoming dates for in-person or virtual trainings check our [Training page](#). We also offer more personalized trainings; please reach out to advocacy@lssmn.org if you're interested.

FIND YOUR LEGISLATORS AND THEIR CONTACT INFORMATION

1. Go to <https://www.gis.lcc.mn.gov/iMaps/districts/>
2. Enter your address. You will now see your state and federal senators and representatives.
3. The top two results are your state representative and state senator.
4. To the right of the legislator's name, you will see a button that says "Contact." Click this, and it will take you to their legislative profile, which typically has the contact information for both the legislator and their legislative assistant.

Enter Address, City, State, and Zipcode

Address match!

	Heather Keeler (DFL) MN House - 04A	Contact  District 
	Rob Kupec (DFL) MN Senate - 4	Contact  District 
	Michelle Fischbach (R) U.S. House - 7	Contact  District 
	Amy Klobuchar (DFL) U.S. Senate	Contact  District 
	Tina Smith (DFL) U.S. Senate	Contact  District 

Note: Some legislators do not list their email and instead have a link to a mail form. This is an online form you can fill out that will be sent to the legislator as an email.

If you would like to directly email the legislator instead of using their mail form, you can find their contact information by using the staff directory for the House and Senate:

- <https://www.house.mn.gov/members/list>
- <https://www.senate.mn/members?id=alphabetica>

ADVOCATE TO YOUR LEGISLATOR

By phone

When contacting your legislator by phone, use the phone number for either the legislator or the legislative assistant listed on their legislative profile. If you reach a receptionist, ask to speak to the legislative assistant. Don't be surprised if the legislative assistant is busy; you can leave a voicemail, and they will receive your message.



When you call...

- Identify who the message is for.

This message is for Representative/Senator [Legislator's Name].

- Tell them your name.

My name is [your name].

- Tell them briefly about yourself. Share if you live in the legislator's district, if you have volunteered with the office, what your role is at your organization, or if you have anything else you think they should know about you.

I am a constituent of your district, and I work as a direct support professional supporting people with disabilities.

- State the House File (HF) or Senate File (SF) number for the proposed legislation, and what action you want your legislator to take. Persuade them to take action. Consider including a short personal story.

Please vote yes/no on HF XXXX.

- Say thank you!

Thank you for your time!

Tips:

- Be respectful.
- Keep it brief.
- Write out a script for yourself so you feel confident. Writing it out can also help you make sure your message is short.

By email or mail

When contacting your legislator by email or by mail, use the email or mail address listed on their legislative profile.



When you email:

- Identify who the message is for.

Dear Representative/Senator [Legislator's Name].

- Tell them your name.

My name is [your name].

- Briefly share about yourself. Share if you live in the legislator's district, if you have volunteered with the office, what your role is at your organization, or if you have anything else you think they should know about you.

I am a constituent of your district, and I work as a direct support professional supporting people with disabilities.

- State the House File (HF) or Senate File (SF) number for the proposed legislation, and what action you want your legislator to take. Persuade them to take action. Consider including a short personal story. This sentence seems a little bumpy. (Learn how to find the HF and SF number for your bill in the Track the Legislation You're Advocating For section in this toolkit on [page 10](#).)

Please vote yes/no on HFXXXX.

- Say thank you!

Thank you for your time and consideration.

- End the email or letter with your name and address so they can confirm you are a constituent.

Sincerely, [your name].

[Your address]

Tips for written communications:

- Keep it short. Letters and emails can be a little bit longer than a phone call, but still try to keep it brief – usually 5 to 6 sentences will suffice.
- Some legislators choose to share an in-district address and phone number in their legislative profile (listed as their interim address). If you mail legislators during the legislative session, make sure you are sending your letter to their office.

By meeting with them

Schedule and Make Arrangements for the Meeting

- Use email to set up meetings with legislators. Email the legislative assistant directly, or copy them on the email to your legislator. Find their contact information by using the steps outlined in the Find Your Legislators and Their Contact Information section above.



Here is an example of an email you could send to set up a meeting:

Dear [Legislator's Name].

My name is [Your Name], and I am your constituent. My address is [Your Address]. I was wondering if you had some time to meet to discuss [list a particular issue or proposed legislation here].

Here are some dates and times that currently work for me:

[Date, Time]

[Date, Time]

[Date, Time]

Please let me know if any of these work for you.

Best,

[Your Name]

- Identify where the meeting will take place.
 - o **In-person meetings** are typically held in the legislator's office.
 - o Some legislators may offer **virtual meetings**. If you are able, offer to set up the virtual meeting by saying something like:

I'd be more than happy to organize a meeting on [Virtual Platform Name] if that works well for you.
 - o Otherwise, ask the legislator if they can set up the meeting.
- Confirm the meeting by emailing the legislator's office a few days before the meeting to make sure it is still scheduled as planned. Schedules for legislators are extremely busy, and sometimes meeting times get shifted.

Lead the meeting

- Thank the legislator or legislative assistant for meeting with you.

Thank you for taking the time to meet with me today.

- Introduce yourself and, if applicable, the organization you are representing.

Hi! My name is [name] and I am a [job title] for [organization].

- Briefly share about yourself. Share if you live in the legislator’s district, if you have volunteered with the office, what your role is at your organization, or if you have anything else you think they should know about you.

I am a constituent of your district, and I work as a direct support professional supporting people with disabilities.

- Briefly explain why you are meeting with them. If you are meeting with them to talk about proposed legislation, identify the House File (HF) or Senate File (SF) number, and clearly state your position on the proposed legislation. Take a few minutes to share three to four reasons why you support or oppose it. Make it persuasive! Sharing about how proposed legislation impacts you can be very impactful. Use simple, clear language. Avoid using acronyms or words that others outside of your profession may not know.

I am here today in support/opposition to HF/SF XXXX. I support/oppose this because... It will have this impact on me...

- Give them space to ask questions. The legislator or legislative assistant might have questions about your talking points, how the proposed legislation will impact you, and other questions. If they ask a question that you do not know how to answer, that’s okay! Tell them that you will follow up with the answer after the meeting.

Now that I have shared my position, what questions do you have for me?

- Make an ask. If meeting about legislation, this could be a request for the legislator to support or oppose the legislation. This could also be a request for the legislator to help persuade other legislators to support/oppose it.

Can I count on [Representative/Senator] [Representative/Senator’s last name] to vote yes/no or HF/SF XXXX?

After the meeting

- Send an email or a card to the legislator thanking them for the meeting, and include a photo if you took one. If there were any questions requiring follow up, include the answers to those questions in this email.



Tips for meetings:

- Arrive early – at least an hour in advance. Finding your legislators office can be a bit confusing so leave plenty of time.
 - Use the Capitol Complex Visitor map to navigate the Capitol complex.
- Prepare for the meeting to end early. Legislators and legislative assistants have tight schedules and might need to end the meeting early to make it to their next appointment. Be concise, and emphasize your ask and personal persuasive story within a five-minute window. Make sure you take a photo after the meeting.

By testifying

After proposed legislation, often referred to as a bill, is introduced in either the House or the Senate, it is referred to a committee. For example, if a bill to fund housing is introduced, it might be referred to the Housing Finance and Policy Committee. When a bill is scheduled to be heard in committee, the public is allowed to testify.

Testifying is a way to tell your story and the potential impact of the bill.

Prepare to testify

Remember, legislators are your neighbors, and they want to hear what you have to say. However, when testifying, your time in front of the committee will be limited. All testifiers are encouraged to write their testimony in full.

Information to include in your script

- **Always speak through the committee chair.** All questions and answers during committee hearings are routed through the committee chair. Address the chair as “Chair” or “Chair [Last Name].”
- **Introduce yourself.** When speaking to the committee, clearly state who you are and any roles or identities you would like to share that you feel are relevant to the bill. For example, if you are testifying on behalf of an organization, state the organization and your role.
- **State your position.** Clearly state if you support or oppose the bill you are speaking on.
- **Persuade.** Take a couple minutes to share a few reasons why you support or oppose the bill. Make it persuasive! Sharing how you will be personally affected by the bill can be very impactful. Legislators will often use these personal stories to sway others on the floor to pass a bill. Keep your message simple, and avoid any technical jargon.
- **Make an ask**

Example Testimony: Hello Chair and members of the committee. My name is [first and last name] and I am [any roles or identities that you have that are relevant to this bill that you would like to share]. Thank you for the opportunity to share my support/opposition of HF/SF XXXX. I support/oppose this bill because... This bill will have this impact on ...



Chair and members of the committee, vote Yes/No to HF/SF XXXX.

Tips for testifying:

- Arrive early. Getting to the meeting early will give you a chance to survey the meeting space, identify legislators, and make last-minute changes to your presentation.
- Answer questions from the committee. The committee might have some follow-up questions for you after you testify. Try to provide straight forward answers. It's okay if you don't know the answer to their questions. Just say so if you don't have the answer and offer to provide follow up.
- Be respectful. Your views are important, and you have a right to be treated courteously by all members and staff. Likewise, legislators are more likely to respond to polite treatment. There are many sides to every issue, and each one has merit.

TRACK LEGISLATION YOU'RE ADVOCATING FOR

You can track House and Senate bills by going to the "Bills" page on the Minnesota State Legislature website: <https://www.leg.mn.gov/leg/legis>.

On this page, you can search the House and Senate bills by author, topic, committee, action, and the status of each bill. If you would like to receive alerts about the bills you are interested in, create a MyBills account at <https://www.leg.mn.gov/mybills/login>. After you make an account, you can search bills, add them to your profile, and get email alerts about them.

STAY UPDATED & ADVOCATE WITH LSS

Stay updated. When key moments arise, the LSS Advocacy team sends out action alerts, inviting you to contact your legislators on issues and legislation that affect our services and the people we support.

We only do this at critical moments to maximize our impact. Responding to an alert only takes a minute, and does make a difference.

Sign up to receive action alerts at <https://www.lssmn.org/get-involved/advocate/alerts>

Advocate. On the page where you can sign up for alerts, you will see a red button that says "Take action". Clicking this button will take you to a page where you can enter your name and address, then send a message directly to your Minnesota senator and/or representative. You will see an autogenerated message. Feel free to personalize the message before sending.

REFERENCES

Source material:

Legislative Advocacy Toolkit | ACLU of Minnesota (aclu-mn.org)

Arranging a Meeting with Your Legislator | NCRA

The Advoc-Kit: Advocacy Tools for the Health Care for the Homeless Community

How to Advocate as a Nonprofit for Older Americans

Communicating for Change | Prosperity Now

Embedded citations:

¹ADVOCATE Definition & Usage Examples | Dictionary.com

²The Rules and Regulations of Nonprofit Advocacy (ncoa.org)

