How to Advocate in the time of COVID

TRAINING SESSION
Ways to Advocate:

● Meeting with Legislators Virtually
● Participating in Legislative Session and Committee Action
● Activism on Social Media with Chyna Crockett
● Learning from Thought Leaders and Political Pundits
Meeting with Legislators Virtually

Tips for a Successful VIRTUAL MEETING with Your Tennessee State Legislator

Keep in mind that your goal is to develop an ongoing relationship with your elected representatives, as well as to influence their position on specific issues or bills.

Know your legislator. The state website at: capitol.tn.gov can help you find out and tell you a little about who they are.

Find out what committees your legislator serves on. Are they relevant to your issues?

Look up their website, Facebook and Twitter accounts. Most TN legislators talk about the issues that matter to them online.

In addition to your own state representative and senator, you may want to think about establishing a relationship with other legislative leaders who chair relevant committees or serve other leadership roles.

Prepare ahead of time. Write down key points to discuss in the meeting as well as any questions you might have. Practice what you want to say. Appointments move quickly, sometimes lasting only 5 to 15 minutes. Be prepared to make your case simply and efficiently but also to make a personal connection if you can.

Limit your topics. Focus on a single issue or bill, two at most. Don’t risk confusing your legislator or weakening your case by bringing up too many issues at once.

Your legislator may not know about the needs and experiences of those with disabilities. Be patient if they make a mistake and take time to educate him/her in plain language. Do not use jargon or acronyms.

Do not be intimidated. Legislators will view you as the expert on the issue and on your life experience.
Meeting virtually vs. Meeting Face to Face

What’s Different?

1. Be familiar with the technology (Zoom, WebEx, FaceTime, etc.)
2. Log in 5 – 10 minutes early
3. Quiet room with good lighting
4. Have a Plan B – phone to call legislator if Plan A fails
Meeting virtually vs. Meeting face to face.

What’s the same?

- Dress appropriately
- Be courteous
- Introduce yourself – who you are, the issue you want to discuss and that you are from their district.
- Don’t forget to listen
- It’s ok to disagree
- Thank them!
Participating in Legislative Session and Committee Action
How Legislators Talk About Issues that Matter

- TN State Legislators meet in committees
- Committees focus on a specific issue like “Education”
- It’s important to pay attention to committee work because they talk about issues that will affect us
The TN General Assembly Website is:

www.capitol.tn.gov

Follow the issues that matter to you by following those legislative committees.

There is a House and Senate version of most committees.
Summary: What’s Available on the Committee Page

List of Committee Members
(who meets to talk about this issue)

Current Committee Calendar
(what they’ll be talking about in their meeting)

Current weekly schedule (when they’ll be meeting)

Video - watch live or past meetings
Activism on Social Media

CHYNA
Social Media Takes Us **FURTHER**

The easiest way to show your support for people with disabilities and to get your legislator's attention is to participate on social media.
**SPREAD AWARENESS**
by sharing content from disability thought leaders.

**TAKE ACTION ON DISABILITY ISSUES**
by commenting, tagging and direct messaging your local government and elected officials.

**SHARE YOUR EXPERIENCES**
by creating original posts about challenges (accessibility issues, confusing informational materials, etc) and tagging your representatives.

**STAY ALERT**
by following local disability groups that notify you to policy changes.

**SPEAK UP!**
by signing and sharing digital petitions in opposition or support of a piece of legislation.

**PLUS**
tag us @tndisability and we will share your posts!
What Makes a Good **SOCIAL POST?**

- Short, clear, and personal message
- Eye-catching video & photos
- Hashtags that are relevant to the conversation
- She tagged the Coalition and the Dept of Health to increase the chance that the post will get shared further.
The Basics on **HASHTAGS**

Including hashtags in your posts means that you are taking part in a conversation happening on social media. They make your posts visible to non-followers.

1. **Do NOT use spaces, punctuation or symbols.**
2. **Do NOT string too many words together.** The best hashtags are short and memorable.
3. **Use relevant and popular hashtags.** If it is too obscure, it will be hard to find.
4. **Limit the number of hashtags you use.** More isn’t better.
5. **Make sure your accounts are public.** Otherwise only your followers see your posts.

**TOP DISABILITY HASHTAGS**
- #disability
- #disabilityrights
- #disabilityawareness
- #invisible
disability
- #disabilitybenefits

**TOP POLITICAL HASHTAGS**
- #TNleg
- #TN
- #cripthevote
- #tenncare
- #medicare
- #TNpol
- #TNpolitics
- #TNSenate
- #COVID19
- #systemic
Leaders in State Government to **FOLLOW & TAG**

**GOVERNOR BILL LEE**
- Twitter: @GovBillLee

**LT. GOVERNOR RANDY McNALLY**
- Twitter: @ltgovmcnally

**CAMERON SEXTON**
- Speaker of the TN House of Representatives
- Twitter: @CSexton25
- Twitter: @cameronsextontn

**PLUS**

Your **LOCAL** representatives work for you!
look them up and stay connected:

I'm speaking at Tennessee Disability Coalition's Disability Day on the Hill this THURSDAY! My legislators Senator Bo Watson (TN-11) and State Representative Mike Carter are invited to come hear me speak about a topic that is important to me! #TnCovidVaccine #disability Tennessee Department of Health @tndisability

My name is Chyna

- I have a disability.
- I care for someone with a disability.
- I advocate for people with disabilities.

I live in east Tennessee.

I "go further" by...

speaking out for my friends!
LISTENING | LIKING | SHARING
Learning from Thought Leaders and Political Pundits
What is a "Thought-Leader"?

An individual or organization that is recognized as an authority in a specialized field and whose expertise is sought.
What is a “Political Pundit”?

A person who offers to mass media their opinion or commentary on political analysis for which they are knowledgeable and/or considered a scholar.

In other words – an expert.
1. MEDIA
   - State Government Reporters
   - Opinion Editors

2. DISABILITY ADVOCATES
   - Disability Advocacy Organizations
   - Individual Disability Advocates

3. HASHTAG CAMPAIGNS & OTHER RELEVANT INFLUENCE
Tools for Success!

- Tipsheet: How to Have a Successful Virtual Meeting with Your Legislator
- Toolkit: How to Advocate on Social Media
- Full Training: How to Advocate During the Pandemic

www.tndisability.org