GETTING IN TOUCH WITH YOUR ELECTED OFFICIALS

Getting in touch with your elected officials is the first step towards becoming an effective advocate. To help determine which elected leader you should target and how to get in touch with them, follow these steps:

1. **Determine if your issue is handled at the local, state, or federal level.** Does the issue you care about impact your immediate community? If so, this issue might involve your city council member, mayor, or other local official. If the issue is bigger than the local level, it may be best handled by state or national elected officials.

   Example: To advocate for investment by your local government in evidence-based early education programs, identify a local elected leader who has a connection to education priorities in your community.

2. **Find the contact information for your elected official.** Once you’ve tracked down who you want to contact, it’s time to figure out how!

   1. Go to usa.gov to find resources for identifying your federal, state, and local representatives.
   2. Visit the official website of your elected officials to find their phone number, office locations, or email addresses.

3. **Decide how you would like to interact with your elected official.** You can call your elected official’s office and speak with a staff member, attend a town hall meeting among fellow constituents, or visit your elected official’s office to advocate for your issue.

   Example: If you & other concerned constituents want to advocate for continued government investment in national service, attend a town hall meeting for your member of Congress when they are back in town.

WHAT TO SAY TO YOUR ELECTED OFFICIAL

Whether you are on a phone call with a staff member or attending a town hall meeting, figuring out what to say can be intimidating. Here are some pointers to help you advocate effectively:

1. **Introduction.** Always begin an interaction with your elected official by introducing yourself and any organizational affiliations you may have. Explain the purpose for your call, visit, or attendance.

2. **Discuss the issue.** Talking about your issue effectively involves a storytelling approach. Describe a personal experience that relates to the issue and how you were impacted, followed by specific action items that the elected official should take.

   "I was a Jumpstart Corps member and my transformative experience led me to the field of early childhood education. However, early educators are not compensated nearly as well as the average kindergarten teacher. Therefore, your support for legislation that aims to achieve pay parity is vital to the continued growth of early educators like myself."

3. **Next steps.** Recap your issue and offer to send any follow-up information that addresses the elected official’s concerns. Ask for a follow-up meeting or remind the staffer that your group will be excited to thank the elected official should they come out in support of the issue.

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