They Work For Us!
Congressional Advocacy 101

Health Care for the Homeless advocates meeting with Congressman Al Green during the 2017 Conference
Regina Reed, MPH
Policy Organizer
National Health Care for the Homeless Council

Regina is responsible for representing the interests of the National HCH Council in Washington, D.C. on Capitol Hill. She is also responsible for mobilizing the HCH community to engage in advocacy to end homelessness!

Esther Kahng
Director of Housing and Insurance Policy
House Committee on Financial Services
Chairwoman Maxine Waters (D-CA)
WHO is Congress?

WHAT does Congress do?

WHERE is Congress located?

WHY should we engage with Congress?

HOW do we engage with Congress?
WHO is Congress?
CIVICS REFRESHER

Levels of Government
- Local
- State
- Federal

Branches of the Federal Government
- Judicial
- Executive
- Legislative

Congress
- House (435)
- Senate (100)
CIVICS REFRESHER

Two Senators in the Senate

One Representative in the House
WHAT does Congress do?
Congress works on many issues important to the Health Care for the Homeless community.

- Medicaid
- Health Centers
- Mental Health & Substance Use
- Housing
- SSI/SSDI
- Food Stamps
- Tax Credits
- & Many Others…

Congress has the sole authority to enact legislation, write the federal budget, declare war, the right to confirm or reject many Presidential appointments, and substantial investigative powers.
Congress works on many issues important to the Health Care for the Homeless community.

It is their job to represent the interests of the people living in their state and district… THEY WORK FOR US!
WHERE is Congress located?
WASHINGTON, DC

IN THE STATE/DISTRICT

ONLINE

The Capitol Building, Washington, D.C.

Longworth House Office Building, Washington, D.C.

The outside of Rep. Waters’ LA Office

Maxine Waters

@RepMaxineWaters

Proudly serving the people of California’s 43rd District in Congress. Chairman of the House Financial Services Committee (@FSCDems).

 Joined April 2009

Followed by Ruben Gallego, Tammy Duckworth, Senator Vincent Fort, and 9...

Tweets Tweets & replies Media Likes
WHY should we engage with Congress?
You must engage with Congress because:

- You know more than they do
- You are a subject matter expert
- You have real world experience
- You may have taken an oath
- Your job may require it
- You have a moral obligation to yourself and your community
HOW do we engage with Congress?
FIND CONTACT INFORMATION BY...

- Looking on the member’s website
- Calling the office and asking
- Through advocacy staff or coalitions

WAYS TO ENGAGE

- Online
  - Email
  - Social media
  - Website forms
- On the phone
  - Cold call
  - Pre-scheduled
- In person
  - At your clinic
  - In-district office
  - Capitol hill office

PRO TIPS

- Congressional Hotline: (202) 224-3121
- House staff emails - Jane.Doe@mail.house.gov
- Senate staff emails - Jane_Doe@SenatorLastName.senate.gov
- Google is your friend
- If they are your delegate, let them know
A quick note on legality

Advocacy versus Lobbying

The process of making your voice heard on an issues that affects your life and the lives of others. This includes education, outreach, data sharing, relationship building, and lobbying.

Activities that are in support or opposition of a specific piece of legislation.

Nonprofits and health centers can and should engage in non-lobbying advocacy and there are no legal restrictions.

Nonprofits and health centers can lobby, but with restrictions.

→ Private citizens can engage in unlimited advocacy and lobbying.

→ Obtain permission from your employer before identifying with them for congressional lobbying or advocacy.

→ When in doubt, identify as a private citizen.

“Hi my name is Danielle and I’m a doctor serving very low-income people in Minneapolis. I’m here today representing myself as a private citizen.”
CONGRESS:
Perspective from a staffer!

Esther Kahng
Director of Housing and Insurance Policy
House Committee on Financial Services
Chairwoman Maxine Waters (D-CA)
Thank You!

Staff and clients from Baltimore’s Health Care for the Homeless on Capitol Hill

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