



Ten Tips for Effective Advocacy

1. **Consider yourself an important source of information.** Legislators have limited time, staff and interest on any one issue. They cannot always be as informed as they might like to be on all the issues, including the issues that concern you. Your job is to provide them with the information.
2. **Tell the truth.** There is no faster way to lose credibility than to give false or misleading information to a legislator.
3. **Know who else is on your side.** It is helpful for a legislator to know what other groups, individuals, state agencies and/or legislators support your cause.
4. **Know the opposition.** Anticipate who the opposition will be. Provide legislators with information to counter your opposition's arguments.
5. **Make the legislator aware of any personal connection you have.** Maine's legislative process is very accessible, and a personal relationship is often helpful. No matter how insignificant you may feel it is, if you have friends, relatives or colleagues in common, let them know.
6. **Don't be afraid to admit you don't know something.** If a legislator wants information you don't have or asks something you don't know, offer to get the information for them later.
7. **Be specific.** If you want a vote, information, answers to a question, make sure you ask for what you want directly and get an answer. Know the bill's LD number and make it clear whether you support or oppose it. Give your name, job title, facility, hometown, and any other relevant identifying information.
8. **Follow up.** It is important to find out if your legislator did what was promised. It is also important that you thank them if they voted in support of your position.
9. **Don't "burn bridges."** Respectful discourse always matters. It is easy to get emotional over issues of importance, but be careful not to permanently alienate a legislator. Your strongest opponent on one issue can be your ally on another.
10. **Partner with MHCA.** MHCA is here to help unify and enhance long term care advocacy in Maine. We are available to collaborate at any step in the process. And to help organize our grassroots efforts, we always appreciate an update on how the advocacy event went!