

LeadingAge Conversations With Congress: Fall Advocacy Guide

Make your voice heard safely during COVID-19

ADVOCACY IN THE AGE OF COVID-19

Aging services providers have been on the frontlines of COVID-19. From affordable senior housing communities, to nursing homes, to hospice providers, the needs of communities serving seniors must be heard loud and clear by elected officials – especially during the ongoing health and economic crisis.

WHY ADVOCATE NOW?

Congress is considering the next major coronavirus relief package. Lawmakers are negotiating key parts of the relief bill that impact the day-to-day life of aging services providers and the people they serve.

WHAT ABOUT COVID-19?

If you're wondering whether aging services providers can still connect with lawmakers during COVID-19, the answer is YES! Whether through zoom meetings or facetime community tours, lawmakers want to hear from you more than ever.

PANDEMIC-SAFE ADVOCACY FOR AGING SERVICES PROVIDERS

Setting up a Congressional connection is easier than you think! LeadingAge will be with you every step of the way.

FOLLOW THESE EASY ADVOCACY STEPS

- 1. Assess Capacity:** Technology is your new best friend! Decide what kind of advocacy you and your community can make time for:
 - **Cellphone Tour:** Invite a lawmaker for a virtual tour through your community, using Facetime
 - **Virtual Meet-and-Greet:** Arrange a remote meet and greet between residents and lawmakers, using Facetime, Zoom, or Skype, then take the lawmaker on a cellphone tour through the community
 - **Outdoor Meeting:** Organize an outdoor meeting! Using a designated outdoor space, appropriate PPE, and social distancing, your lawmakers or their staff may be able to physically come to your community
 - **Joint Virtual Meeting:** Join a LeadingAge-arranged virtual meeting with lawmakers and other providers from your area
 - **Social Media:** If all else fails, tweet, post, share! Take pictures of the best masks, the most innovative hallway activities, the most resilient residents, and tag your lawmakers on social media
- 2. Find your Lawmaker:** You elect your lawmakers to represent you! Visit www.congress.gov and use your address to find your members of the House and Senate. LeadingAge will work with you to contact your local office and make the personalized request to have a meeting.
- 3. Prioritize Safety:** The health and safety of your community is the top priority. Offer to meet virtually or outdoors, and be ready to follow up with a written request to the lawmaker's office. If the lawmakers themselves can't join, ask for staff! LeadingAge can help at every step.
- 4. Ask for Help:** For help setting up the meeting or once your meeting or activity is confirmed, contact your state LeadingAge partner and Joe Franco at jfranco@leadingage.org or 202-508-9442. We can provide background information, support, and talking points.

CONGRESSIONAL MEETING PLANNING GUIDANCE (IN-PERSON OR VIRTUAL)

CONNECT ABOUT COVID-19 AND BEYOND

As a provider of services for older adults, you have a pandemic-informed lens to our day-to-day work with older adults, both during the crisis and beyond. Use this advocacy opportunity to tell the story of your community and what lawmakers can do for you.

PREPARING FOR THE VISIT:

If in person with safety precautions, the meeting will have these easy components and will be socially distanced. You will want to:

- 1. Prepare a place to meet outside and welcome the Congressional member/staffer**
- 2. Tell them the story of your community and who you serve. Discuss the issues you are facing with COVID-19 and how you need help with PPE, testing and resources for residents and staff**
- 3. If possible, have a resident provide their story and what it means to them to be a part of the community**
- 4. Ask your member of Congress and/or Congressional staffer if they will support our [Essential Asks](#) for provider relief**

VIRTUAL VISIT:

Virtual visits can have just as much impact. Be sure to still plan for the virtual meeting and have an agenda to follow. Consider these key pieces:

- 1. Welcome and introductions**
- 2. Tell the story of your organization and discuss your recent experience with COVID-19**
- 3. If possible, have a front line staff member talk about how they serve residents during this critical time**
- 4. Have a resident speak and provide their perspective and experience during this time. This is a great opportunity for a Resident Association leader to provide key insights and the resident perspective**
- 5. Ask the member of Congress or staffer what questions they have about your community and COVID**

If possible, ask if you can have time at the end of the meeting to provide a cell phone tour of your community using Facetime or a similar app. This would be a great opportunity to invite some more of your residents to introduce themselves and share their experience if time allows. If you're an affordable housing provider, consider lining up an inhabited unit to view during the tour (in advance and with resident approval).

If you have specific questions about our legislative issues or your member of Congress, contact Joe Franco, Vice President of Grassroots at 202-508-9442 or jfranco@leadingage.org. LeadingAge can help to craft a personalized visit for your elected officials and brainstorm ideas on how to ensure the meeting is a success.

FOLLOW-UP:

Follow up with also be key with the congressional office and our team in D.C. Once you have met with your elected members of Congress let us know how it went at www.leadingage.org/grassrootsform. Be sure to thank the Congressional office for their time and follow up with requests as needed. It's the start of a relationship!