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# Healthcare Research Policy & Advocacy Process Toolkit

Prepared by the Rutgers-NYU Center for Asian Health Promotion and Excellence  
Community Advisory Board

2026

# AN INTRODUCTION TO HEALTH POLICY AND ADVOCATING FOR CHANGE

## CENTER OF ASIAN HEALTH PROMOTION AND EXCELLENCE OFFERS

- A Toolkit for Healthcare Professionals and Community
- Representatives
- Guide to ,” Making Your Voice Heard”.
- How to become a proficient advocate for the health policy?
- How to contact your legislators and get support.
- How to propose idea that can lead to a bill or a law.

# HEALTH POLICY AND RESEARCH IN HEALTHCARE

- Government-funded biomedical research has historically boosted economic growth, strengthened national security, and kept countries at the forefront of global innovation.
- Health policy research helps governments and institutions understand what works, what doesn't, and how to deliver care more effectively.
- Raising Health Policy awareness including monitoring and evaluation is next stage of the policy advocacy process, in which policy research can have a significant impact on policy making process.
- Advocating for evidence-based Health Policy can have significant impact on research funding for departments. It is important to understand the connection.

# THE POWER OF ADVOCACY TO DRIVE HEALTHCARE POLICY INITIATIVES





# WHAT IS HEALTH POLICY?

- Definition: **Health policy** (*Refers to the decisions, plans, and actions undertaken to achieve specific healthcare goals within a society*).
- A principle of action adopted or proposed by a government, political party, business or individual.
- Examples:
  - Policies that impact community health
  - Regulations on prescription drugs.
  - Funding for public health programs.
  - Laws regarding healthcare insurance coverage.
  - Policies on environmental impacting health and healthcare.
  - Mandatory vaccination schedule recommendation and implementation.



# WHY DOES HEALTHCARE POLICY MATTER?

HEALTHCARE POLICY IMPACTS EVERYONE, FROM INDIVIDUALS TO ENTIRE COMMUNITIES.

- It influences:
  - **Access to care:** How and where community members can receive medical services.
  - **Healthcare Cost:** The price of treatment, prescriptions, and insurance.
  - **Quality of care provided:** The standards and safety of medical services.
  - **Public health:** How we prevent and respond to diseases and health crises.
  - **Health Research:** Choosing which research can get more support and funding.

# WHO MAKES HEALTH & HEALTHCARE POLICIES ?



## Federal Level

- Congress (Legislative Branch)
- The President and Federal Agencies (Executive Branch)
- The Supreme Court (Judicial Branch)



## State Level

- State Legislatures (Legislative branch)
- The Governor and state health departments (Executive Branch)
- The Supreme Court (Judicial Branch)



## Local Level

- City Councils and County Commissions
- Local health departments
- County Health Departments

# POWER OF OUR VOICE

**ELECTED OFFICIALS** REPRESENT THEIR CONSTITUENTS—  
**THAT'S US AND OUR COMMUNITY!**

- A personal story and perspective can be more powerful than any statistic in influencing elected officials.
- Legislators and their staff track constituent contacts. A high volume of calls, emails, or letters on a single topic signals that it's a priority for voters.
- Everyone must understand how to contact their legislators and how to have their voice heard.





# DOING YOUR HOMEWORK

- **Identify Your Legislators:** Find your U.S. Senators, U.S. House of Representative, and state legislators.
- **Review the state website of the legislature.** -(Senators and General assembly Members)
- **Research the Issue:**
  - Understand the specific bill or policy you are trying to addressing.
  - Know the bill number (e.g., H.R. 1234 or S.B. 567).
  - Research your legislator's previous voting record or public statements on the issue.



# HOW TO CONTACT YOUR LEGISLATOR

- **Email or Letter:** Great for providing a well-thought-out detailed argument.
- **Phone Call:** Quick, effective, and shows urgency. Staffers log every call, and a high-volume calls get noticed.
- **In-Person Meeting:** The most impactful method to advocate; but requires prior scheduling and preparation.
- Participate in the **State house visit**
- **Capitol Hill day**
  - Federal –in Washington-DC organized by various organizations.
  - Any organization can plan a **HILL DAY** to meet with the legislators who can support the bill or cause. The appointments can be made in advance to meet all the legislators on SAME day.



# WRITING A LETTER TO THE LEGISLATOR



## Opening

- Identify yourself as a constituent.
- State the purpose of your communication immediately.

## Body

- Share your personal story and explain why the issue matters to you and your community.
- Provide factual information and data to support your position.

## Closing

- Make a clear "ask" (e.g., "I urge you to co-sponsor this bill" or "Please vote 'no' on this legislation").
- Politely ask for their position on the issue.
- Thank them for their time.
- Include your full name and address.

# MAKING A PHONE CALL

- **Prepare a Short Script:** What is the reason for your call
- Specific item-one at a time. (You'll likely speak to a staffer. )
- Write down your key points and what do you expect the legislator to do.
- **Be Polite and Respectful:** The staffer's job is to listen and report your concerns.
- **Key points for your call:**
  - "Hello, my name is [Your Name], and I am a constituent from [Your City/Zip Code]."
  - "I'm calling to ask Senator/Representative [Legislator's Last Name] to [state your clear ask]."
  - "This issue is important to me because
  - [briefly share your personal story]."
- **Finally, thank the staffer** for their time.



# IN PERSON MEETING

- **Request the Meeting:** Call the local or D.C. office and request to schedule a meeting with the health legislative aide.
- You can also e-mail request for an in- person meeting through state legislator's website.
- **Preparation:**
  - Prepare a written document and make a one-page leave-behind document containing key points.
  - Be prepared to answer any questions that the staff might ask.
  - Be respectful and professional, even if you disagree.
- **During the Meeting:**
  - Start by thanking them for their time.
  - State the issue clearly, propose an idea or suggestion.
  - Share your personal story and explain the importance of the issue.
  - Make a clear, concise ask.

Offer to be a resource for them on this issue in the future.

# FOLLOW UP - STAYING ENGAGED

- **Send a Thank-You Note:** Follow up with a brief email thanking the legislator or staffer for their time and restating your key points.
- **Monitor the Legislation:** Keep track of the bill's progress.
- **Stay Informed:** Follow local and national news and subscribe to legislative updates.
- **Encourage Others:** More voices make the bigger impact!

# HOW DOES AN IDEA BECOME A BILL, AND THEN A LAW?

Deep dive into how the simple ideas lead to a bill which can become a law.

# IDEA AND DRAFTING

- The community member can start with a proposal, and the legislator may choose to support the idea.
- The process starts with an **idea**, which can come from a member of Congress, a constituent, a special interest group, or a government agency.
- A member of Congress then sponsors the idea and has it formally written into a bill.
- The bill is then given a number (e.g., H.R. 1 for House of Representatives bills or S. 1 for Senate bills) and introduced in either the House or the Senate



# COMMITTEE ACTION

- Once the idea/bill is introduced by the legislator, the bill is referred to a committee relevant to its subject matter, such as the Committee on the Judiciary or the Committee on Foreign Affairs.
- Health related bills are referred primarily to the HEALTH Committee.
- The committee carefully examines the bill, holds hearings to gather testimony from experts and the public, and may make changes (amendments) in a process called "markup." The committee then votes on whether to recommend the bill for a vote by the full chamber. If the committee doesn't act on a bill, it "dies" in committee.
- Its very important to continue to talk to legislators to support the bill so that it does not DIE.

# FLOOR TO ACTION

- If the bill is reported out of committee (such as health committee), it's placed on a calendar to be considered by the entire chamber (the "floor"). Sometimes it is called second reading.
- In both the House and the Senate, members debate the bill and can propose further amendments.
- The rules for debate vary between the two chambers. After debate, a vote is held. A simple majority is required for the bill to pass.

# REFERRAL TO ANOTHER CHAMBER

- If the bill passes one chamber, it is sent to the other.
- For example, if it passed the **House**, it goes to the **Senate**, where it goes through the same committee and floor action process.
- The second chamber can approve the bill as is, amend it, or reject it.

# CONFERENCE COMMITTEE AND FINAL APPROVAL

- If the second chamber amends the bill, and the two versions are different, a **conference committee** is formed.
- This temporary committee, made up of members from both the House and the Senate, works to resolve the differences and create a single, unified bill.
- **Both chambers** must then vote on and approve this final, compromised version.



# PRESIDENTIAL ACTION

ONCE THE IDENTICAL BILL HAS BEEN PASSED BY BOTH THE HOUSE AND THE SENATE, IT IS SENT TO THE PRESIDENT. THE PRESIDENT HAS A FEW OPTIONS:

- **Sign the bill:** This officially makes it a **law**.
- **Veto the bill:** The president can refuse to sign the bill and send it back to Congress with an explanation of their objections. Congress can then attempt to override the veto with a two-thirds majority vote in both the House and Senate.
- **Take no action:** If the president does nothing for 10 days (excluding Sundays) while Congress is in session, the bill automatically becomes a law. If Congress adjourns before the 10 days are up, the bill is automatically vetoed in what's known as a **pocket veto**.

# FINAL TIPS & TAKEAWAYS

- **Call to Action** –especially if the initiative is through an organization
- Determine what is the **KEY issue** for CAHPE members?
- Why **funding for research** is important for community health?
- **Everyone's Voice Matters. Start today.**
- **Find Your Legislators:** Visit the website such as <https://www.njleg.state.nj.us/> for New Jersey and <https://nyassembly.gov/leg/> for New York State
- **Make the Call** –if you need help , discuss with a group who supports the same cause.
- **Write the Email.** – get help from good writers in your network
- **Get Involved** – Awareness is the first step of involvement
- **Together, we can create a healthier community for all through ADVOCACY**

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# THANK YOU

## **Tool Kit prepared by:**

**Varsha Singh**, DNP, ANP-C, SCR.NEA-BC, FAHA, FAANP, FNYAM, CPAHA

**Advisor- CAB**

**Member –CAHPE**

## **Reviews/Edits Acknowledgement**

Upendra Chivukula, DBA

Emerson Ea, APRN, DNP, FAAN, PhD

Sunanda Gaur, MD

Vasudev Makhija, MD, DLFAPA