

How to tell your story

These meetings give you the opportunity to express your views to the people that represent you and urge your legislators to form policies that are aligned with issues their constituents care about, including housing. Your voice is an essential part of the policy development process—your conversations with lawmakers can impact the outcome of government policymaking and encourage your lawmakers to build a collaborative policy!

How long will our meeting be?

Meetings with legislators are usually less than 15 minutes. You might have more time with lawmakers, but because this is a busy time during the legislative session, some legislators may only be able to meet for a few minutes.

What should I focus on during the conversation?

In addition to highlighting the legislative priorities, you can emphasize the personal impact of housing on you and your community. This is an opportunity to share with lawmakers how their policies affect you, and connect the facts and figures to the emotional impacts on their communities.

Tips for a successful meeting

- **Practice ahead of time!** Write down your top two or three points on an index card, or practice out loud to yourself to make sure you feel comfortable sharing your message.
- **Connect with your lawmaker as a person.** Start your conversation by thanking them for meeting with you, and maybe ask them how their day is. When you are warm, friendly, and authentic, you create the foundation for a productive conversation and a positive ongoing relationship.
- **Stick to your message.** Stay focused on the legislative asks. If you veer off track, it will draw attention away from the issue of state funding for housing. Your lawmaker may try to take the conversation in a different direction. If that happens, try to pivot the conversation back to your point.
- **It's okay if you don't know the answer to a question!** You don't have to be an expert, and your lawmaker won't expect you to know everything. If you're not sure about something, you can let them know someone from Habitat will get back to them and can point out our staff's contact info on the legislative leave-behind document. (And then let a staff member know so we can follow up!)
- **When your lawmaker isn't supportive, keep calm and carry on.** It can be frustrating or nerve-racking when your representative isn't receptive. If that's the case, take a deep breath, keep your cool, and try getting your point across another way. Check out the talking points in the Legislative Meeting Guide. Maybe framing the message differently will help.
- **Keep it personal and, when possible, relate the issue back to your district.** Lawmakers will notice when an issue relates directly to their own constituents. If you know of a nearby development built by Habitat or have a friend who recently purchased a Habitat home, use these examples to illustrate your point.