

HOW TO LOBBY VIA VIDEO CONFERENCE?

1. We're all participants in a work-in-progress:

Since the COVID-19 pandemic, we all must reinvent our means of communicating with social distance as best possible. Don't be put off if it doesn't go smoothly. We're all learning.

2. Follow the pattern of traditional constituent office visits:

a) *Phone first and ask for an appointment.* Leave a voice-mail message if no one picks up. If they don't get back to you in 24 hours, try again...and again, pointing out that ***you are a constituent*** and that *this is your 2nd or 3rd call.*

b) *If the legislator isn't available when you are, ask to talk to a staff member* who has a particular assignment in the area that you want to talk about – for example, criminal justice reform.

c) *Be prepared for a short, but productive meeting.* You might only have 5 or 15 minutes during the Session, so prepare a short outline of what you want to say. (See ["Lobbying in Annapolis"](#).)

d) Have a *flyer / "fact sheet"* to give them showing a few key reasons for support of the bill(s). (See our [Issue Briefs](#).) For virtual, Zoom or other online contact, you may want to *send this via email ahead of time* –and be ready to re-send it, if they can't find the email. You also could use "share screen" but would need to include such information in your email also, or they may not remember it / get it in their notes.

3. Time your visit, if possible, within a day or two before a vote on the bill(s) that you care about.

Find the hearing date by entering the bill number on the [Maryland Legislature Page](#). The notes or memory of your visit, otherwise, may no longer be "at the top of the pile" or in recent memory.

4. Include a personal anecdote.

Personalize your communication with a related anecdote involving yourself, your family, friends or acquaintances--or, at least, some incident that has made a strong impression on you (e.g., the police killing of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor or Freddie Gray.) When legislators support a bill, they almost always give a memorable anecdote from their own lives or a constituent's.

5. What if they don't respond to your virtual visit with words of support or encouragement?

Conclude your virtual visit by saying “thank you” and ask the legislator or staffer if they will support the bill(s).

If they don’t say “yes” or otherwise encourage you, ask them whether they have a concern or something that would hold them back from support.

WRITE DOWN A FEW NOTES about their response and send these back to your MAJR organizers! Either you or MAJR organizers should get back to the legislator / staffer with information to answer those concerns –and thank them again for favorable consideration.

Feel good about this! You can give yourself a virtual pat-on-the-back for doing your civic duty and your part as a Friend following your leadings. Your contact may make a difference! *Legislators and their staff admit that, sometimes, only one or a few contacts may help the legislator decide her or his vote!*