



AREA AGENCIES ON AGING ASSOCIATION OF MICHIGAN

TIPS FOR ADVOCATES ON WRITING LETTERS

BE BRIEF – Boil your message down to one page or less and attach any detailed information, charts, etc. on separate sheets.

BE DIRECT – Tell the elected official what action you want him/her to take, such as introduce legislation, cosponsor a bill, vote for (or against) a bill in committee, or on the floor. Ask him/her to respond to your letter. Be sure to include your address and phone number.

BE CIVIL – Don't threaten, insult, wisecrack or name call.

DON'T OVERDO IT – Don't write too often. Make your letters timely so your legislator can take positive action to help.

PERSONALIZE – Use your own words. You don't need to type the letter – handwritten letters are very effective if you have legible handwriting. Avoid form letters and postcards.

FOCUS ON ONE ISSUE – Your letter will have the most impact if you speak out on one issue at a time.

HAVE THE FACTS – The more facts you know, the better. Refer to legislation by title or number. Cite experts to back up your arguments.

COMPLIMENT – Elected officials are human and like to be recognized and thanked for their work. Always write a thank you note if the elected official does what you ask.

REMEMBER – ON ANY ONE ISSUE, EVEN A FEW LETTERS CAN HAVE AN IMPACT. EVEN ONE LETTER, WITH A CLEAR-CUT PERSUASIVE ARGUMENT CAN BE A DECISIVE FACTOR!



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TIPS FOR ADVOCATES ON MAKING PHONE CALLS

IDENTIFY YOURSELF – Give your name and city and explain that you are a constituent with a concern.

BE FLEXIBLE – Ask to speak to the elected official directly, but if that isn't possible, speak to his/her aide. Aides do a lot of research for legislators and often recommend what they should do.

IDENTIFY THE ISSUE – Have notes handy with the specific bill number or title and any statistics you want to convey. State your position clearly and directly.

BE POLITE BUT FIRM – Do not threaten with the power of your vote. If the elected official disagrees with you, don't hesitate to politely push back.

ASK FOR INFORMATION – Elected officials have lots of valuable information that they are more than willing to share. Ask when action is expected on your issue. Ask about the opposition and what impact they are having.

ASK FOR SUPPORT – Ask if the elected official already has a position on your issue and how he/she intends to vote.

ASK FRIENDS TO MAKE PHONE CALLS – One call is powerful and five are even more so.

REMEMBER – ON ANY ONE ISSUE, EVEN A FEW PHONE CALLS CAN HAVE AN IMPACT.