



Lobbying for the Minnesota Health Plan

“Lobbying” has negative connotations, but in reality it means asking your legislator to take a particular position on a specified issue, in this case, to support the Minnesota Health Plan. It is helpful to see lobbying as relationship building. You want to respect your legislator’s public service and expertise as you state

your case and ask for support. You may not get a commitment or positive response to your request for support, but over time, your legislator, especially if hearing from others, will be more likely won over. Legislators depend on constituents to educate them about what is happening in their district and what legislation is most important. and personal contact with constituents is very persuasive. A face-to-face meeting is the most effective form of advocacy, but personal letters and phone calls can also be very effective. Petitions, form letters and emails have less impact on legislators. Remember that the legislators work for you and the people of Minnesota; you do not need to be an expert to lobby your legislators.

The underlying message:

“Access to health care should be guaranteed to everyone, it is a basic human right. I believe that a single-payer system, like the MN Health Plan, is the only affordable way to achieve universal coverage and guarantee everyone equal access and benefits.”

Face to Face Meetings:

Before your meeting:

- To find out who represents you and how to contact them, go online: <http://geo.commissions.leg.state.mn.us/districts/start.html>, or call House Information at (651) 296-2146 or (800) 657-3550, and Senate Information at (651) 296-0504 or (888) 234-1112.
- Call and request a meeting. Leave your name, contact information, a brief explanation of the reason for your visit and the number of constituents who will be attending. You may want other constituents to accompany you for greater impact.
- Check the MUHCC website to see if your legislator has signed on as a co-author <http://muhcc.org/minnesotahealthplan/billcoauthors>
- Print materials from the MUHCC website if you would like them for reference during your visit, or to leave with your legislator. Don’t expect that your legislator is well versed on the issue or the bill. Materials can be found here <http://muhcc.org/resources/activisttoolkit>
- Plan what you want to say. You don’t want to be scripted but you want to feel prepared.

When you meet:

- Expect to be brief- 10-15 minutes.
- Explain why you are there and briefly tell your story- what in your life (personal experience or family/friend experience) leads you to find fault with our current system and support the MN Health Plan (MHP).
- Ask your legislator to support the Minnesota Health Act, Senate File 118/House File 135 – the bill that creates the Minnesota Health Plan. Be direct, “When the Minnesota Health Act comes up for a vote, can I count on your support?”
- If there are specific questions that the legislator asks that you can’t answer, offer to get back to them. Contact MUHCC (info@mihcc.org) for more info.

- If you go for the visit and your legislator is unavailable, please use a note card and leave a brief personal message using the bulleted points above.
- **If you are a health care provider make sure to state this.**
- If your legislator is already a supporter, ask him / her to take a leadership role. Ask for insights into other legislators and how they might be convinced to support the Minnesota Health Plan.

After the Meeting:

- After your visit, make notes on the legislator's response. Please share your experience at info@muhcc.org . Even a “no” can inform us and help us hone our message.
- Send a follow-up letter thanking the legislator and/or staff for your visit. Include a brief summary of action to be taken (typically, support for the MN Health Plan).
- If you can, follow up a few months later, provide an update and remind the legislator that you are counting on his/her support.

Writing you legislator

Since Legislators receive only a handful of letters on most issues, each letter carries real power. Below are some tips for effective letter writing.

- The opening paragraph should state who you are (example: a constituent, person with illness etc.) and why you are writing (example: need for an overhaul to our health care system). Urge the legislator to take a specific action (vote in favor of the MN Health Act).
- The second paragraph should tell your story in a personal way and then give evidence to support it. (Example: discuss being denied coverage, or having health care bills you can't afford, or having to change providers when you change a job). Be personal, brief and honest. Give some supporting facts. You may want to refer to our fact sheet <http://muhcc.org/sites/default/files/Did%20you%20know0509.pdf>
- The third paragraph should be a brief restatement of your request and provide final encouragement. Be specific, for example: Please vote in favor of the Minnesota Health Act, Senate File 118/House File 135 when it comes before you. When possible, somewhere in your letter you should also try to thank your Legislator for some action they've taken in the past or just for being a public servant.

General Tips

- One-page letters are ideal. Say what you need to say, but be as brief as possible.
- Keep your letter to one issue. A letter with a laundry list of issues has less impact than a letter on one topic.
- Make it legible and neat. Legible handwritten letters and well-typed letters are both effective.
- Make sure you include your full name, address, phone and/or email.

Phone Calls

If you have the opportunity to speak to your legislator, follow the general principles of a face-to face meeting. If you are leaving a voice mail message, follow the general guidelines for a letter. You may want to write out what you wish to say. Always remember to state that you are a constituent and give your name, address and phone number.