

## Tips on Speaking with Legislators

Communicating with your representatives in the Maryland State Senate and House of Delegates is a vital way to advocate for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD). Here are some tips to be more effective in your advocacy through emails and calls with legislators.

### **Personalize your message.**

Bulk emails that are cut and pasted do not work as effectively as a personal story. The best way to have your message make an impact with legislators is when it is a personal story that ties into the legislation you are discussing.

### **Put things into context for legislators.**

Many legislators are part-time; they have other jobs and responsibilities so you cannot assume they will understand the issues or your needs unless you explain them fully.

### **Focus on your representatives who are members of committees hearing the issue.**

Bills are often reviewed in depth by specific groups of legislators in Maryland's House and Senate known as Committees. If one of your representatives is part of a committee that is hearing about a bill that you are interested in, you should reach out to them in particular.

### **You can always call the representative's office!**

Sometimes things can get buried in emails. If you have something critical to say, it can be beneficial to call your legislator's office. Respectful reminders are helpful to everyone.

### **Be concise!**

While legislators are there to hear from constituents like you, they can be very busy. Try your best to make your point in three minutes or less!

### **Connect on a human level.**

Be honest in answering how the legislation would affect you or a loved one, for better or worse. Not everyone can understand what you have gone through, but sharing it with others can only help.