

Quick Guide to Cancer Legislative Advocacy

Advocacy is an important tool in the fight against cancer. Cancer is not just a medical issue, it is also a public policy issue.

Access to screening and early detection services, clinical trials, health insurance options, appeals, employment rights, disability benefits, medical decision-making, estate planning, consumer rights, and other issues that can come up as a result of a cancer diagnosis are all rooted in laws.

And, laws are passed through the legislative process. When individuals and communities use their voices to share their opinions and experiences to engage in the legislative process, to either support or oppose a legislative issue or a specific piece of legislation (a bill), that is called legislative advocacy. If you need a refresher course on American government, visit TriageCancer.org/Advocacy to watch a helpful video about how a legislative bill becomes a law.

There are many different types of advocacy, which you can learn more about from our Quick Guide to the Spectrum of Advocacy: TriageCancer.org/QuickGuide-Advocacy.

Engaging in legislative advocacy doesn't have to be difficult or time-consuming. Here are some simple things that you can do:

- Vote (and not just during a presidential election—local elections matter, too!)
- Join a cancer advocacy organization's advocacy efforts (visit TriageCancer.org/Advocacy for a list of options)
- Sign up to get email action alerts from a cancer advocacy organization
- Learn about an issue or bill, and then share that information, by:
 - Sending an email to educate family, friends, neighbors, and others in your community
 - Sharing information on social media
- Communicate with your elected officials on social media, by email, or in-person
- Meet with your elected officials or their staff in your community, at the state capitol, or in Washington, DC
- Attend a town hall or community event hosted by your elected officials
- Attend a lobby day hosted by a cancer advocacy organization or oncology professional association

Find Your Elected Officials

Not sure who your current elected officials are? It's easy to find them. Visit Commoncause.org/Find-Your-Representative and enter your zip code. It will list all of your elected and appointed officials, from the President to your City Council members.

Tips for Communicating With Your Elected Officials

Writing letters: Sending your letter by email or fax is most efficient. Be sure to keep it concise - it should be no more than one page and should focus on one issue. State your purpose in the first paragraph. If your letter pertains to a specific bill, use the bill number and/or name. Try to always be respectful, even if you disagree with your elected official. Request a reply.

Meetings: Contact your elected officials' office to schedule a meeting at their local office, at the state capitol, or in Washington, DC. If your elected official is not available to meet with you, you can ask to meet with one of their aids who handles the issue area that you are going to talk about. For example, if you want to talk about cancer research funding, then you should meet with the person who handles health issues. During the meeting, make sure to mention that you are a constituent, talk about the issue or specific piece of legislation that is important to you, and share your personal story. After the meeting, follow up with a thank you note and offer them your future assistance.

Sharing Your Story: Sharing your personal story can be a powerful tool. Your story can help elected officials understand an issue. Sometimes, they are looking for a real life, personal story from their own district that shows the need for legislation. That said, we encourage everyone to make conscious disclosure decisions. Read our Quick Guide to Disclosure, Privacy, & Medical Certification Forms at TriageCancer.org/Disclosure.

Cancer Advocacy Through Social Media

Do you use social media? If you do, then you can engage in cancer advocacy efforts on social media! You can use any platform to engage in cancer advocacy, by sharing information with your network. If you want to engage in legislative advocacy or connect with your elected officials, they typically use Facebook, Instagram, X, and Bluesky. You can find a list of social media handles for members of Congress here: TriageCancer.org/Congressional-Social-Media.

Tips for Social Media Advocacy

Here are some general tips on using social media for cancer advocacy efforts:

- Follow/like your elected officials and other leaders who you want to hear from and engage with on social media.
- Search for relevant hashtags and terms on X, Instagram, and Facebook and find information on issues you care about.
- Follow/like resources that you trust for accurate news and information related to cancer, health care, politics, etc. Beware of fake news. Double-check something before you share or repost it. Only share information from reliable sources (e.g., trusted cancer organizations).
- If you are concerned about disclosure and want to protect your privacy, you can create accounts specifically for engaging in cancer advocacy (e.g., don't use your name as your handle, don't post your picture as your profile).
- Connect with social media influencers in the cancer community and other thought leaders.
- Communicate with elected officials and those influencers on social media by starting a conversation. You can do that by including their handle (@username) in your post.
- When posting, use relevant #hashtags to help people find you or the issue that you are talking about.
- Participate in Bluesky chats or Facebook live events hosted within the cancer community.

Examples of Cancer Organizations Engaging in Legislative Advocacy

- American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network
- Association of Community Cancer Centers
- Association of Oncology Social Work
- Be The Match
- Blood Cancer United
- Cancer Support Community
- Colorectal Cancer Alliance
- Fight Colorectal Cancer
- FORCE: Facing Hereditary Cancer Empowered
- International Myeloma Foundation
- Komen Advocacy Alliance
- Lung Cancer Alliance
- Lungevity
- Lymphoma Research Foundation
- National Brain Tumor Society
- National Coalition for Cancer Survivorship
- Oncology Nursing Society
- One Voice Against Cancer
- Ovarian Cancer Research Fund Alliance
- Pancreatic Cancer Action Network
- Progress for Patients
- Sarcoma Foundation of America
- ZERO—The End of Prostate Cancer

Examples of Cancer-Related Hashtags

- #hscsm – health care social media
- #ayacsm – adolescent & young adult cancer social media
- #blcsm – bladder cancer social media
- #btscsm – brain tumor social media
- #bcscsm – breast cancer social media
- #cscsm – colorectal cancer social media
- #gyncscsm – gynecological cancer social media
- #lscsm – lung cancer social media
- #mmscsm – multiple myeloma social media
- #pancscsm – pancreatic cancer social media
- #pscsm – prostate cancer social media
- #BRCA
- #CancerAwareness
- #CancerCaregivers
- #CancerSurvivorship
- #CancerRights
- #CancerResearch
- #TriageTalks
- #ProtectOurCare
- #YoungAdultCancer