



## **MARYLAND SHRM LEGISLATIVE ADVOCACY TOOLKIT**

### **WHY WE ADVOCATE:**

Maryland SHRM represents more than 7,000 members of the Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM) across the state. The importance of advocacy is critical to supporting and advancing SHRM's programs and visibility. SHRM members must proactively engage in advocacy efforts in order to advance the interests of our profession. Laws, regulations and other public policies significantly affect employers and their ability to grow and provide benefits, training and a safe work environment for their employees.

Every day, policymakers and elected officials can positively or negatively influence issues affecting our members and the organizations they represent. Sometimes those officials have very little knowledge of the impact their decisions have on those organizations or their employees.

Increasingly, it has become critical that we take action in shaping public policy that positively affects our profession. **Your voice matters!**

Members of the Maryland General Assembly are most interested in and responsive to their own constituents—people from their own communities. It's critical that legislators hear directly from HR professionals about our priorities and concerns.

Without SHRM member advocacy promoting our priorities, concerns and recommendations, policymakers will fail to develop effective workplace laws. By offering themselves as well-informed, articulate and enthusiastic advocates, SHRM members will become a valued resource to elected officials. We can advocate on important issues and help craft and implement policies that are beneficial to both employers and employees.

## ABOUT THE MARYLAND GENERAL ASSEMBLY

The General Assembly is Maryland's legislative body and directly represents the electorate. The state has 47 districts represented by 47 Senators and 141 Delegates.

The Legislature:

- Enacts laws necessary for the welfare of the State's citizens and certain laws dealing with counties and special taxing districts.
- Proposes amendments to the Maryland Constitution, which must be ratified by the voters during the general election.
- Meets in **regular session for 90 calendar days each year beginning the second Wednesday in January** to act on more than 2500 pieces of legislation and the State's annual capital and operating budgets.
- Meets in special session when called by the Governor or when a majority of each house petitions the Governor.
- To review the Legislative Process:  
<http://dls.maryland.gov/pubs/prod/NoPbITabLibResDocs/Legislative-Process.pdf>
- Find my Representatives:  
<http://mgaleg.maryland.gov/mgawebsite/Members/District>



## WAYS TO EFFECTIVELY COMMUNICATE

***Face-to-face meetings:*** Perhaps the most effective way of educating and informing legislators on issues is a face-to-face meeting. It provides an excellent opportunity to convey and receive information, and to gain key insight into how your legislator stands on an issue.

**Phone calls:** A personal phone call provides an opportunity to directly engage staff and reinforce your relationship with the legislator's office.

**E-mails:** If you have staff members' e-mail addresses, this is a direct and more "personal" way of connecting with them. In addition to sending a letter, you can deliver a personal message directly to a staff member with whom you have an established relationship. Legislative staff e-mail is for direct communication to the staff member only.

**Letters:** Use letters primarily to convey more-extensive messages or to accompany information such as information packets, relevant articles, etc. But brief thank-you letters are always appreciated.



## PHONE CALL SAMPLE

### REVIEW BACKGROUND OF BILL – PROVIDED BY MD SHRM

**Example:** Last year we saw several employment related bills introduced that created some concern for me, as an HR professional and/or our members. First, let's talk about **House Bill \_\_\_\_**, the Healthy Working Families Act.

Enclosed is our testimony on this bill. I'd like to share some highlights and a few additional considerations:

As of our latest survey results, **nearly 88% of our survey respondents oppose HB 1.**

The bill has no less than 12 separate mandates addressing when, how and for whom the leave must be accrued, paid, rollover, administered and more. Of those 12, the one we find will impact the greatest number of our members is the requirement to offer the paid leave for all temporary and part time employees, so long as they regularly work as few as 12 hours per week. Less than half of our survey respondents indicate they do that now.

So, what's the impact?

- Non-profits will be impacted too. One currently offers a one-hour lunch period that is fully paid. If HB 01 is enacted, they anticipate offsetting the increased cost by still offering a full one-hour meal period but only ½ of it will be paid, reducing non-exempt employees' direct compensation by 2.5 hours/week. No one wins in that scenario.
- Our company will be impacted by...
- Incremental impact. The impact of HB01 will be compounded by other legislative proposals on top of existing mandates related to paid and unpaid leave.

## PLEASE TAKE THIS ACTION

Place a personal call to your Representative's office by following these fast and easy steps:

1. Refer to MD SHRM's suggested talking points on this issue and legislation.
2. Add any personal testimonials about your workplace needs and examples from your workplace.
3. Always ask for action:

*For these reasons and more, we ask you to:*

1. *Please vote for or against BILL #\_\_\_\_;*

2. Please consider the similar impact related bills like those described above will have on Maryland employers and your constituents.

*If you have any question or I can provide more information, please contact me at:*

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

4. Share feedback and any needed follow-up with MD SHRM!



## EMAIL COMMUNICATION

REVIEW BACKGROUND OF BILL - PROVIDED BY MD SHRM (See example above)

### SAMPLE EMAIL COMMUNICATION:

E-mail your Representative's office by following these fast and easy steps:

1. Go to the Maryland General Assembly Home page; Click on "Voice My Opinion"
2. Personalize the template email language to include your message with your own story.
3. Always ask for action:

*For these reasons and more, we ask you to:*

3. *Please vote against Bill \_\_\_\_\_;*
4. *Please consider the similar impact related bills like those described above will have on Maryland employers and your constituents.*

*If you have any question or I can provide more information, please contact me at:*

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

4. Click "Submit."



## IN-PERSON MEETING

### Planning For Meetings

- Find your Representative and contact information:  
<http://mgaleg.maryland.gov/webmga/frmmain.aspx?pid=legisrpage&tab=subject6>
- Contact your elected official's office in writing. Address the request to the staff scheduler, be sure to include your name, meeting date requested, the issues you wish to discuss, and your contact information (phone and email).
- Once the request has been made, follow up with a phone call to the scheduler three (3) to five (5) days later. Be persistent as you might not be able to confirm a meeting until the week prior to the requested date for the meeting.
- Send a meeting request letter or give them a call. Use the template letter to send an email, fax to your representative's scheduler or call their district office.
- Confirm your meeting a week prior with the scheduler.
- Contact the MD SHRM Government Affairs Committee to find out what HR-related legislative issues are being addressed that you should discuss with lawmakers and their staffs. Ask for fact sheets for the legislative issues so that you and your group can prepare for your meeting.
- Print copies of fact sheets to leave with the Representative and his/her staff.
- Plan to share stories of how the legislative issues you will be discussing will have a direct impact on your organization and its employees.
- Attend your meeting. Be early for your meeting and plan to wait. Ask a staff member to take a photo of you with the Representative.
- Send thank you notes to the Representative, the scheduler and any other staff you met with.

## Template Meeting Request Letter

Attention: [INSERT SCHEDULER'S NAME]  
The Honorable [INSERT Name of Representative]  
[INSERT Street Address]  
[INSERT City, State and ZIP Code]

Dear [SCHEDULER'S Name],

As an HR constituent and member of the Maryland Society for Human Resource Management (MD SHRM), I am writing to request a meeting with [INSERT Senator / Representative] [INSERT name] in his/her district office on [INSERT DATE], to discuss issues before the General Assembly that are important to the HR profession.

MD SHRM represents more than 7,000 members of the Society for Human Resource Management across the state. One of our ten affiliated chapters is \_\_\_\_\_ with approximately \_\_\_\_\_ [#] members who live and most who also work in your District.

As you work to solve some of our state's toughest challenges, HR professionals can provide unique insight into the dynamics of the 21st-century workplace that can benefit you and your staff.

I understand that [INSERT Senator / Representative]'s schedule is very busy. Please contact me at [INSERT your e-mail address] or [INSERT your phone number] to schedule this meeting.

Thank you in advance for your consideration. I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Sincerely,  
[INSERT Your Name]



## Tips For A Successful Meeting With Your Elected Official

Once your meeting is scheduled with your elected official and or with staff, here are some tips to remember to make the meeting a success:

- Be on time or early. Time is a precious commodity to your representative and their respective staff.
- Be succinct. Often times, he or she may only have 10 to 15 minutes to speak with you.
- Be prepared. Be well informed. Be well organized.
- Respect the legislator's position. Understand his or her viewpoint.
- Leave the fact sheet(s) (**Upon your request Maryland SHRM will provide these**) as a summary of your main points after the meeting is over.
- Follow up with the appropriate staff and thank him or her for their time.

Often, a representative's schedule will change throughout the day through no fault of yours. If this happens, more than likely you will meet with a staff member. Treat the meeting as if you are meeting with the representative.



## Template Thank You Letter And Follow Up

Following a meeting with your representative and/or his/her staff it is important to follow up with a “Thank You” note. Sending a thank you note serves three main purposes:

- Expresses appreciation for the time to discuss issues of importance to your profession;
- Reiterate key message points;
- Provide additional information, if necessary. (If your lawmaker and or staff has requested additional details, studies, statistics, sharing an article which mentions the issues you discussed etc.)

### SAMPLE

< Name of Staffer>

The Honorable

Office Street Address

Office City, State and ZIP Code

Dear ,

Thank you for taking the time to meet with me in your district office (or other location). I appreciate the opportunity to meet with you to discuss issues of importance to the HR community.

We would be grateful for your support on these issues: **INSERT ISSUE or BILL**

Thank you again for the opportunity to meet with you. I am happy to keep your office informed on the issues impacting employers within the community. Please contact me via \_\_\_\_\_ or if you need further information. I look forward to speaking with you again.

Sincerely,

Your Name

## **Event Types and Activities for Local Chapters**

### **Request an In-District Meeting**

Call the scheduler in the representative's office and ask for a brief meeting to discuss your issue's policy and priorities. Be sure to prepare a brief agenda, allow the representative to express her/his ideas, and don't leave without extracting some specific policy commitment from her/him.

### **Conduct an Issue Forum**

Organizing a forum and inviting experts and community leaders to the table is an excellent way to bring an issue to the forefront. Keep in mind, however, that a forum should educate the public, not serve as a political platform.

### **Attend Town Hall Meetings**

Many representatives arrange town hall meetings during the recess period. It is important, especially since such information is not often readily available to the public, to find out from their office when and where these meetings will take place. It may also be useful to pull together materials for the representative and her/his staff

### **Encourage Constituent Calls and E-mails**

Representatives are often responsive to voter opinion, especially before she/he returns to the state to meet with constituents. Calling and e-mailing before recess or while in District can create the impression that there are mounting objections to a representatives' stance on a particular issue.

### **Circulate a Sign-On Letter**

A sign-on letter with signatures from prominent leaders, as well as a clear outline of your position on an issue, can attract valuable attention. Distributing it at public events, as well as delivering it in person to the state office, is recommended.

