*Meeting directly—whether virtually or in person—with your members of Congress and their staff is one of the most effective ways to help them understand the value of your work. These conversations give policymakers a firsthand perspective on the vital services you provide and underscore the importance of securing funding for community-based providers. Here are some tips designed to help you prepare for successful meetings that leave a lasting impact.*

**Introduce yourself.**

Open the conversation by introducing yourself and telling where you are from. Share if you are also a member of ANCOR.

**Make a connection between your operations and the district/state.**

Highlight the service providers and number of employees in the member’s state/district. Give a brief overview of the services and supports you provide, as well as the population you serve.

**Be concise.**

Meetings with members of Congress and staff are often brief, usually 30 minutes or less. Conveying your messages in a succinct manner will ensure you can cover all the topics in the time allotted, but don’t feel pressured to cover all topics in one meeting if time runs out as you can always follow-up with staff at a later date.

**Congressional staff are important too!**

If you have a meeting with congressional staff instead of a legislator, please know that they are issue experts and trusted advisors to their bosses. Staff-only meetings usually last longer than meetings with the member and give you the opportunity to go into more detail about our issues. In turn, a staff member will brief their boss on the issue. Staff are pivotal in determining whether the legislator will support a policy or not.

**Focus on key issues.**

Focus on the reason for your meeting, for example focus on the importance of Medicaid for the people you support. Explain how cutting Medicaid could have on your operations and your ability to provide services. Details and personal stories will help bolster your description of the real impact.

**Divide speaking roles among meeting participants.**

Before your meeting begins, take time to discuss with your group what roles you want each person to play. For example, one person should begin the meeting and make introductions, one or more people can talk about the workforce crisis and its impact, and one person can be prepared to talk about the legislation and make the ask.

**It’s okay to not know all the answers.**

If you are asked a question and don’t know the answer, don’t feel pressure to respond right away. Please tell the staff member you will follow up with the answer. You can let ANCOR staff (Elise Aguilar eaguilar@ancor.org or Noah Block nblock@ancor.org) know to follow up with the office.

**Close the deal.**

Be sure to end the conversation with a specific request. For example: “Please help us on the continue to be able to provide critical services in our communities by protecting Medicaid and not cutting it in any form.”

**Say thanks.**

Do remember to thank the legislator and/or staff for taking time to meet with you and let them know that you will follow up. Also, please extend an invitation for them to visit one of your facilities in the district/state or ask ANCOR to follow-up.

**Common Pitfalls to Avoid**

* ***Do not discuss the PAC or PAC contributions.***

It is illegal to discuss PAC contributions in government offices.

Don’t discuss the PAC or any contributions to the member.

* ***Leave the industry jargon at the office.***

Avoid using specific terms or acronyms without explaining their meaning such as I/DD, DSP, or HCBS. Don’t assume the office is familiar with our issues.

* ***Keep personal politics out of your lobby visits.***

Please remain respectful and remember that despite personal political beliefs, ANCOR is a nonpartisan organization.