



Engaging / Advocating with Public Officials

Why We Need to Engage Public Officials

At the local, state and federal level, decisions on funding are made by your elected officials. They need to hear from their constituents – **YOU!** – that funding to prevent and end homelessness is your priority. Your voice is vital to this process! And reaching out can be easy – here are some tools to help.

Learn More About the Process

While you are represented by people at many levels of government, your State Senator and State Representative live in your communities and are essential voices in our campaign

- ❖ Learn how the legislative process works with our “Guide to RI’s legislative process”
- ❖ Learn How to lobby with “Tips for Speaking to Your Legislator”

How You Can Help

Write a letter or email

- ❖ New “Sample Letter/ Email”
- ❖ Consider cc: the Coalition on your email so we can help you follow up, if necessary

Make a call

- ❖ Updated “Power of Community call-in flyer”

Lobby at the RI General Assembly

- ❖ While the General Assembly is in session (typically January-June), the RI Coalition for the Homeless hosts weekly “Until We Reach Zero” Lobby Days for members of the community to talk directly to their legislators.
- ❖ We provide a brief training and a flyer for you to share with your Senator and Representative.
- ❖ Let us know you are planning to attend by contacting LeeAnn at leeann@rihomeless.org.
- ❖ Read “Tips for Speaking to Your Legislator”

Set up a meeting with your elected official

- ❖ After you talk to your elected official, ask to meet in person at the State House or in your neighborhood. If you email the request, consider cc: the Coalition on your email so we can help you follow up, if necessary.
- ❖ Connect with a local service provider to do a tour or use the time to talk about why this issue is important to you.
- ❖ Expect your meeting to be brief, and be sure to start and end with your request for the elected official – their support of the Zero: 2016 campaign goals and allocating resources to accomplish these goals. Here are some points to touch on in your conversation:
 - ◆ Rhode Island can be the first state to end homelessness.
 - ◆ Ending homelessness and creating a system to prevent homelessness will require funding. It is not only “the right thing to do” but has proven cost effective by dramatically reducing current expenditures in shelter, health care and criminal justice systems.
 - ◆ Housing and homelessness organizations are already working together and building off best practices from throughout the country. This work is data-driven and proving successful but needs continued investment to ensure we can help everyone.

If you want a sample script for this conversation, you can view one here

- ❖ Be sure to thank the legislator for their time as you conclude the meeting, and send a brief thank you note (via mail or email) after the meeting – this is a perfect time to remind them of the commitments they made, too.

If You Want to do More

Get a resolution passed by your City or Town Council

- ❖ The City of Providence passed an ordinance in March 2015 to endorse the Zero: 2016 Campaign – you can see it here.
- ❖ If you are interested in introducing a resolution in your municipality, contact LeeAnn at leeann@rihomeless.org.

Write a letter to the editor for your local paper

- ❖ This is being taken care of by the “Communicating our Message” toolkit group

**Thank you to the RI Payday Lending Reform Coalition and RI NOW
for sharing their advocacy toolkits as models for our Zero: 2016 toolkit**



**For more information:
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