BEST PRACTICES FOR MEETING WITH AN ELECTED OFFICIAL

BEFORE THE MEETING

1. **Do the homework to identify the best lawmakers to meet with.** Your time will be best spent meeting with the lawmakers best positioned to influence funding on your issue (e.g., someone with political sway, like the Chair of the Budget Committee, or someone with a personal/professional connection to your issue).
   - The lawmaker who represents you or the district where your child care center, hospital, or organization is located.
   - Lawmakers on the legislative committee that handles budget and appropriations for your priority issue (the specific committee(s) will depend on your state).
2. **Request your meetings well in advance.** Lawmakers have busy schedules, especially during appropriations season. The email requesting the meeting should include the following relevant information:
   - Your name, organizational name, and if you and/or someone in the meeting is a constituent (often lawmakers prioritize meeting with their constituents).
   - What you want to talk about.
   - When you would like to have the meeting and why it is important to meet in a timely manner (i.e., you want to meet before a budget hearing on your issue).
3. **Prepare in advance.** It benefits your issue and organization to be well prepared for your meeting with a lawmaker. In advance, you should:
   - Prepare a 1-pager outlining the importance of your issue, your appropriations ask, and why it is necessary now. Include your contact information.
   - Identify who will be in the meeting (it runs most smoothly if the meeting isn't too large), assign roles and responsibilities (i.e. who will start the meeting, who will say why this issue is important, who will tell a personal story, who will make the ask, and who will close the meeting), and draft talking points that all participants are aligned on.

TIP: Lawmakers have limited time to review materials. Anything you prepare should be as succinct and digestible as possible and prioritize the most important information only; for example data localized for their district. Avoid overburdening lawmakers with dense research, lengthy documents, etc.

DURING THE MEETING

1. **Be on time.** Lawmakers' schedules are busy while legislatures are in session, so the meeting may be brief (potentially as little as 15-20 minutes).
2. **Be concise and follow the talking points.** Because meetings can be brief, you want to make sure that you have time to touch on the most important points: why the issue and funding are important, the personal story, and your appropriations ask.
3. **Listen to their response.** Once you have made your ask, listen closely to the lawmaker's response. Their response can indicate their level of support for your issue, whether they think the funding you're requesting is likely, or what information lawmakers need to grant your funding request (e.g., specific data, etc.).
4. **Answer their questions.** Answer the questions they may have for you as best you can in the meeting, but don't be afraid to say that you'll need to get back to them promptly if you don't know the answer. Make sure you get the contact information of the person you met with, so you can follow up on any questions.
5. **Leave a 1-pager.** At the close of the meeting, be sure to share the 1-pager that outlines your issue and makes your appropriations ask.

AFTER THE MEETING

1. **Send a thank you.** To maintain relationships with lawmakers and their staff, it is important to demonstrate your appreciation by thanking them for their time.
2. **Share materials via email.** Following the meeting, email a copy of your 1-pager and any additional materials that touch on issues that came up during the meeting.
3. **Follow up.** Be sure to keep in touch with the lawmakers and their staff. At appropriate intervals, send an email checking in about the status of your appropriations ask.