



**[00:00:04.050] - Renee**

Cool. All right. Welcome, everyone. We imagine some more folks will be joining us. Please introduce yourselves in the chat so we can get to know each other. We will be doing some work today and interacting in some breakout rooms and things so, it's good to know each other now while we can. Hi my name's Renee Angelo-Mauk. I'm the Director of Operations and Training here at MENTOR Maryland | DC.

**[00:00:24.120] - Renee**

Happy to be here with you all. Our session today, in light of Advocacy August, if you didn't know it's Advocacy August, it is. We are getting it in right before August is over. But we are happy to celebrate Advocacy August with our local expert, Caden Fabbi, who is the Director of Government Relations at the National Mentoring Partnership. We are very excited that he is here. Before I hand it over to him, as most of you already know, MENTOR Maryland | DC has launched a Credly digital badging service, so if you are here today for 95% or more of the session and are an active participant, you will be issued a badge that says you were here. So you can let people know that you did celebrate Advocacy August, and you learned a little something, too.

**[00:01:10.080] - Renee**

So please be aware of that, which will all be done via email after the session. But I'm going to hand it over to Caden.

**[00:01:21.460] - Caden**

Thanks so much, Renee. And hi, everyone. Happy Thursday. Happy almost long weekend. Happy Advocacy August. Happy, happy, happy. Great to be here with you all today.

**[00:01:30.080] - Caden**

My name is Caden Fabbi. I'm the Director of Government Relations with MENTOR. Really excited to chat with you all today about advocacy and all the different pieces of it. I hope not only am I going to be presenting about how you can be an effective advocate, but we're doing some practicing as well.

**[00:01:48.760] - Caden**



To get us started, I'm going to go through just what our next hour plus is going to look like. We're going to do some introductions in an icebreaker before I chat a little bit about grassroots advocacy, what it is. Then we're going to talk about some elements of effective advocacy messaging: how you can take your own story and research and evidence and combine those two things to change hearts and minds. We're going to practice making the pitch, and then we're going to talk about the Advocacy August in the remaining couple of days that we have to participate.

**[00:02:20.570] - Caden**

So first things first. We're going to do some introductions and a quick icebreaker. I'm going to ask you all to please log on to menti.com and respond to the question that's there, which is, when you think about the qualities of a really good advocate, what words describe them? And so you'll log on to menti.com and type in the code 53360-0137. I'll go ahead and put that in the chat so you have it as well.

**[00:02:50.460] - Caden**

Renee is already on it, unsurprisingly. But I will put the code to 5336-0137. Just take a minute or two to go ahead and respond to that, and we'll check out the results.

**[00:03:23.110] - Caden**

You just hopped on, we're doing a quick icebreaker. Please log on to Menti.com and use the code that's in the chat, 5336-0137 and respond to the question, which is, when you think about the qualities of a really good advocate, what words describe them?

**[00:03:37.860] - Caden**

I'm going to stop sharing my screen so we can take a look at the results together.

**[00:03:54.330] - Caden**

All right. I see some faces. See my screen? Good? Thumbs up? All right. Some great words here. I think why I really like doing this icebreaker, especially for these sorts of workshops is because there's a lot of consistency between them. In particular, I'm looking at passionate is always one. I think the passion really shines through when you're advocating effectively, for sure. Persistent and resilient, I couldn't agree more.



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**[00:04:30.460] - Caden**

Any professional advocate will tell you that it's very rarely just a one-stop meeting that you have. You have to be consistent and check in regularly.

**[00:04:40.040] - Caden**

A storyteller, that's a really great one. I want to practice doing that today. Forward-looking, supportive, an effective communicator, absolutely. I really like good listener a lot, too, because advocacy work isn't just all about you communicating yourself and your story and why they should support X, Y, and Z legislation. But it's also about listening and picking up on the cues that you receive during that conversation that you're having, at least in a meeting as well.

**[00:05:08.630] - Caden**

You want to take down when you're meeting with elected officials, especially notes of understanding really what kinds of things that they're interested in. So if they talk about something like their office, their boss, the member of Congress is really interested and excited in workforce development, for example, we know that mentoring has a tie in with workforce development, that's information that you want to keep in mind because you want to communicate with them with a lens that appeals to them.

**[00:05:39.990] - Caden**

Just like any other, just like appealing to a funder or recruiting a new volunteer for your program. You want to try to appeal to their own interests and passions. Being a good listener, I think, is a really great one. Democratic, great, supportive, fierce. I love that one. Shows up, absolutely. You need to be there. Yeah, absolutely. I think it ties in with consistency and then knowledgeable.

**[00:06:05.090] - Caden**

Good stuff, you all. I love seeing these words. I'm making a big word cloud of all these that I've done throughout the past year. So thanks for doing your piece there, I appreciate it.

**[00:06:17.980] - Caden**

I'm going to pull up my slides again. All right. And we'll keep going. So we're actually going to start by doing a quick breakout room. And so you all can kind of get to know each other a little bit, and I have a couple of questions for you to respond to.



**[00:06:43.160] - Caden**

So first, when you get in your breakout room, just introduce yourself, your program, where you're from, and then you're going to respond to these two questions, which are: what is an issue that you are personally passionate to advocate for? It can be mentoring, it can be any other issue that you care about, it's up to you to share.

**[00:07:01.200] - Caden**

Then what are some organizations that do advocacy well? Then just be prepared to come back and share a couple of those high-level responses. Are there any questions about this request?

**[00:07:20.260] - Caden**

All right. I think we'll give you about five minutes or so to go into your groups. We can do groups, I think, of... It looks like there's 27 to five or six or so, I think would be ideal. I'll give our folks in the back in a minute to put that together. But we'll see you on the other side.

**[00:07:37.820] - Renee**

All right. We're going to open the room and start.

**[00:07:41.180] - Caden**

Thank you.

**[00:07:55.380] - Renee**

Everyone's back. You're on mute, Caden.

**[00:08:03.050] - Caden**

Thank you so much. Welcome back, everyone. Thank you for indulging me talking through some of these questions. Keep that issue that you're passionate to advocate for in mind for later. We're going to come back to that. But we're going to talk a little bit about some of the organizations that you think do advocacy really well. So let's dive in and talk about grassroots advocacy. And I'm going to ask folks to either come off of mute and respond with some of those organizations that



came to mind or to share in the chat. Anyone want to hop in and share? Again, what organizations do you think do advocacy well?

**[00:08:37.340] - Speaker 3**

Inter Faith Works.

**[00:08:40.410] - Caden**

Could you say that again? Sorry, I missed that.

**[00:08:42.420] - Speaker 3**

Inter Faith Works.

**[00:08:43.950] - Caden**

Inter Faith Works. Awesome. Is that a local organization or national?

**[00:08:50.720] - Speaker 3**

It's a local organization in Montgomery County. It does advocacy for affordable housing, economic justice.

**[00:08:59.310] - Caden**

That's what it Awesome. Thank you for sharing that. I love, especially, I think some of the best advocacy work, really. It all starts at the local level. That's what grassroots advocacy is all about. It's all about local communities coming together to advocate for themselves. That sounds a lot like what Inter Faith Works is doing in Montgomery County. So thank you for sharing that. Other responses. What organizations do you think do advocacy really well? Can be national, local.

**[00:09:30.530] - Speaker 4**

CASA does really good in-court advocacy for youth.

**[00:09:34.240] - Caden**



Yes, definitely. And they have a national organization, but they do a lot of branches of their organization that do such great advocacy for young people at the local level, too. So couldn't agree more. Other responses, again, can be local or national.

**[00:09:52.040] - Renee**

In the chat, I see Mi'kpa challenge, then NACCHO, N-A-C-C-H-O.

**[00:09:58.960] - Caden**

Awesome.

**[00:10:00.500] - Speaker 5**

Catholic Charities.

**[00:10:02.610] - Caden**

Catholic Charities, definitely. Yes.

**[00:10:06.400] - Speaker 6**

Some of my past experiences was with National Head Start Association for Head Start programs from children and families, birth to five, and then the Coalition for Juvenile Justice.

**[00:10:17.630] - Caden**

Absolutely. Both of those. Great responses. The Coalition for Juvenile Justice, I know, MENTOR. I join those meetings regularly, and they do such a great job of staying on top of JJ-related issues at a national level that are doing really great work. Couldn't agree more. Any other final additions?

**[00:10:43.730] - Speaker 5**

What about Maryland Coalition of Families?

**[00:10:46.900] - Caden**

Maryland Coalition of Families, yes. I think one thing that any professional advocate will tell you is that you can't do advocacy work in a sandbox. You have to work together with partners. And



that's how you create collective collective impact that not only gains attention for the issue that you're advocating for, but really brings that collective interest and power behind it that changes elected officials' minds. I couldn't agree more. Coalition work itself I think is absolutely vital to effective advocacy. Definitely.

**[00:11:22.330] - Caden**

All right, let's keep going. I have a slide here of some pictures, and I just want to say first that I love that you guys were sharing some local organizations that are doing advocacy really well in your community. These organizations are going to be national-looking and really big movements that have happened over the past few years. So in this slide, you can see a couple of different pictures. You see a teacher's union. And so teacher strikes are definitely a way that they utilize their power and their organization, the meaning that teachers bring, I think, to our society and country overall.

**[00:11:59.140] - Renee**

And I should of mentioned, Caden, to my husband is a Union rep for his teacher union. So in the Baltimore area, the Baltimore City Teachers Union, my husband's teacher, Baltimore County, have really strong unions. Even recently, I've been in the news and things for passing things from half of teachers.

**[00:12:16.590] - Caden**

Absolutely. I think there's a reason why teachers unions are always... If a school district is smart, teachers unions are always included at the decision making table, quite literally. And so unions in general are absolutely do advocacy well, and oftentimes we'll have a number of folks doing advocacy work for them at their legislature. We saw young people stand up in a lot of different ways in recent years, and I know it's been inspiring to me, and I'm sure it has to a number of you all as well, but the movement for climate change, and in particular, you see here the Green New Deal, but the Sunrise Movement got a lot of attention a few years ago, all about--

**[00:12:59.920] - Rebecca**

Yeah, I think he froze.

**[00:13:08.860] - Caden**



Mom's Demand Action is another one.

**[00:13:11.040] - Renee**

Caden you froze for a second, if you want to go back.

**[00:13:12.790] - Caden**

If you want to go back. Sorry, it looks like my Internet might be a little bit unstable. I was just talking about the greatness of the youth standing up in the Sunrise Movement and advocating for climate change policies.

**[00:13:24.520] - Caden**

And then also we saw such a large movement in response to the mass shootings that have happened in schools in recent years, in particular, I think of Parkland and the March for Our Lives that was organized by some of those young people. But Mom's Demand Action, some of those gun control and reform organizations also do a really great job, I think.

**[00:13:50.820] - Caden**

Then I just always put on here, too. In the early 2010s, we had a huge movement, the Tea Party movement, in response to what was happening in the federal government. You see these movements happen in all angles. I think one takeaway from it is that a lot of times the biggest movements happen in response to current events and things that are happening in front of you, things that really matter to people. Organizations that are effective at advocacy take advantage of those situations. They elevate it, they fan the flames of those people who are motivated and passionate, and they do something about it. You know, kind of a common thread of organizations that do this type of stuff well.

**[00:14:38.060] - Caden**

There are three different types of advocacy that I want to talk a little bit about. We're going to focus today actually on grassroots advocacy and organizing, but I wanted to quickly touch on what the other two are as well.

**[00:14:48.170] - Caden**



First, lobbying, which is in some circles a dirty term, and that's okay because the term lobbying actually comes from people standing outside of the Halls of Congress in the lobby and waiting for elected officials to come out so that they can talk to them. That's not necessarily how it works now. There are a number of ethics rules that lobbyists have to follow and logging and so on. I know that because I am a lobbyist myself, I'm registered with the federal government. But lobbyists are the people who are going in regularly to the offices of elected officials to advocate for the issues that they're representing. They are the people who are there regularly every day making those calls, contacting elected officials and their staff, and so on.

#### **[00:15:31.840] - Caden**

Another aspect of this is public awareness or education. There's not always an ask or a specific request that's tied in with public awareness campaigns, but it's really just about educating the general public about a particular issue so that eventually down the line, when there is a time to organize around action, these people are prepared to do that.

#### **[00:15:53.470] - Caden**

Different types of tactics in this area, you see a lot of commercials, infomercial things. You'll see things like billboards, you'll see digital media campaigns, different things like that to just raise awareness for the issue at hand there. But I think the most valuable and important type of advocacy is grassroots advocacy, and that's what we're talking about today. And that's really where you all come into the picture as well.

#### **[00:16:18.860] - Caden**

All right, let's go to the next slide and define grassroots advocacy. Grassroots advocacy is when people use strategic tactics to educate and persuade decision-makers on the issues that they care about. It sounds a little bit like lobbying. You are using tactics to get the attention of decision-makers, but it's not always through direct meetings. You use other tactics as well, which we'll talk a little bit more about. Grassroots advocacy work can be done by organizations. It can be a campaign. It can just be a concerned group of citizens coming together. Your local PTA is a form of grassroots advocacy. Those people coming together to voice concerns for what's happening at their school and community. It can really be anyone who's feeling motivated. But ultimately, grassroots advocacy is really important because it is how communities advocate for themselves and advocate for change within what they're seeing within their community to their government.



**[00:17:16.460] - Caden**

And so it's especially important because elected officials have to listen or should want to listen to their constituents because that's quite literally their job. I always say to, and you'll see this in the next slide, that quite literally effective grassroots advocacy can have and will as much influence as the biggest corporation out there. And that's because the power of people. We have the power to vote in this country. And elected officials are really motivated by oftentimes being reelected, by being recognized for the work that they're doing. And so who has the ability to give that to elected officials? It's people. It's their constituents. It's voters within their own community. So ultimately, the job of elected officials is to actually represent their constituents and to address their concerns through public policy. They're motivated by things like re-election, recognition, and influence. And it's important for us as grassroots advocates to keep those things in mind as we figure out what tactics we want to employ in order to influence them effectively.

**[00:18:24.800] - Caden**

All right, so some different tactics that are especially effective in the grassroots advocacy realm. First of all, legislative campaigns. So this involves contacting your elected officials and encouraging them to sign on to a piece of legislation to support a specific pocket of funding.

**[00:18:43.860] - Caden**

When we are encouraging our advocates across the country to reach out to their elected officials and support the Youth Mentoring Grant, which is the only mentoring-specific funding in the federal budget, that is a legislative campaign. And that is grassroots advocacy when we're encouraging you all to take part in that campaign.

**[00:19:02.180] - Caden**

Another example is providing public testimony. Every type of government, this is especially effective, I think, at the state and local level. I know even at the especially local level within township or cities they have a certain amount of time that they give to the public to just go up and share testimony about an issue that's impacting them or that they care about. This is especially effective because it is directly to the decision makers. They cannot really ignore that. It's right in front of their face. And so that verbal type of testimony is especially effective. You see this happen a lot of times at school boards, at state legislatures, especially. I've done that at the Maryland Assembly a couple of times about bills that I worked on in my advocacy past. And I know that that was especially effective, again, because it's directly to the elected officials who are in the room.



**[00:19:52.880] - Caden**

You can also provide written testimony. So instead of going up there and verbally giving a speech and accepting questions, you can just write out something and submit it for the official record. How you approach or do that will depend on the governing body. They have their own rules or procedures to approach it. But ultimately, what you're doing, you're providing that public testimony as a response to a specific piece of legislation that a hearing is being held on. So really effective ways, I think, of doing really good grassroots advocacy.

**[00:20:25.920] - Caden**

Another type of grassroots advocacy is media lobbying. You see this happening on TV. They're talking about prescription drug costs, for example. That might not be coming from a grassroots organization, but they're encouraging you to do grassroots work. They want you to reach out to your elected official and encouraging them to support a specific policy or piece of legislation. This also happens on the radio. You see this happen a lot of times in newspapers as well. Things like op-eds, things like letters to the editor, their responses to news articles, those are all different forms of media lobbying that can be especially effective.

**[00:21:07.070] - Caden**

Remember, elected officials a lot of times are motivated by influence. They're motivated by being recognized within their community. They pay attention to their local papers. I'm thinking specifically of a specific senator in Congress who is really, really... If you want to get their attention, you want an op-ed placed in their local newspaper within their state. Just a really, I think, effective way to get the attention of elected officials for sure is just by writing an op-ed and submitting that to a local newspaper.

**[00:21:39.590] - Caden**

Social media, of course, is especially impactful. I'd say especially at the state or local level, and I'll just share one example of this that I've experienced in my advocacy history. So when I was a student body president in my college and we were organizing to get a bill passed for medical amnesty for young people, essentially saying that if you're under 21 years old and you have been under the influence that you could call to get help for someone who needs medical attention without being penalized. This is a law that's been passed in something like 35 states It's been my



home state in Nevada. It hadn't been approved yet. We worked with what's called the Nevada Youth Legislature. They're allowed to submit a bill for consideration every year.

**[00:22:23.600] - Caden**

We worked with them. We put together this whole entire campaign. We did the hearings. We went and testified. We thought this thing was good to pass, no question. It was coming up to the very end of the session, the legislative session, and it still hadn't been put up for a vote yet in the House. I happened to have a friend who was a reporter from a media outlet that was working there, and he messaged me on Twitter and was like, Hey, I asked about this bill, and it's not on the docket right now. It's looking like it's not going to be heard. I was not one to give up, nor am I ever. As quickly as I could, I organized young people on social media to tag their representatives across the state and encourage them to bring up Assembly Bill 464 for a vote with reasons why I had template messaging ready to go. It got so much attention and response from those elected officials from young people across... Or to the elected officials from young people across the state, that they ended up bringing it up for a vote in the past. I think that really just goes to show you that, again, especially at the state or local level, when usually it is actually the elected officials who are running those social media accounts, they really do pay attention to them, and it really can make a big difference and lead to the ultimate passage of your bill. So social media matters in the advocacy world, again, especially at the state or local level.

**[00:23:52.370] - Caden**

And then finally, one really effective strategy for grassroots advocacy is through mass movement. So what this means is showing up either physically or tangibly in certain ways. So protests, things like boycott, walkouts, those marches, our March for Our Lives, those big mass movements where you're showing up visibly, obviously get a lot of attention. And the reason why is because it ties in with all these other forms of advocacy as well. Usually, if you have enough people showing up, you're going to have media there covering it as well. And usually these types of movements are tied into specific legislative campaigns and asks as well. Just a really effective form of grassroots advocacy that certainly gets the attention of folks.

**[00:24:40.360] - Caden**

All right, I'm going to take a sip of coffee and we're going to talk a little bit about advocacy messaging now. So the next few slides are graphs from an organization called the Congressional Management Foundation. The CMF puts together this survey every few years where they survey



Congressional staff on a variety of different questions. There's always some really, I think, salient takeaways that we take from them and certainly learn from, but we're going to go ahead and do that now.

**[00:25:13.400] - Caden**

So first of all, really, all types of advocacy make a difference. The question on this slide is, in your opinion, how important is each for understanding constituent's views and opinions? And then you'll see the dark blue is very important and the lighter blue is somewhat important. So overall, Meetings between staff and constituents, 99% of the staff say that is at least somewhat important. You see a good percentage of them say it is very important as well. I'll say a lot, these members of Congress in their offices want to hear from constituent groups as well. So you'll see, again, 99% of offices or of the staff that were surveyed see that as important.

**[00:25:57.250] - Caden**

Attending events can be especially effective as well. Meeting in person with the elected official at that time, asking them a question, letting them know who you are can be especially vital. But ultimately, what is the most or very important thing that makes the most difference is meetings between the member or senator and constituents. If you're able to secure ever that direct meeting with the elected official, and certainly that makes a difference at the national level, but really at the state and local level, too.

**[00:26:25.440] - Caden**

I can attest to my experience advocating in the state of Maryland, especially When the assembly is not in session, the representatives within your region are in their communities and they are willing to meet with you about the issues that you care about. That can really, really help you. What's really nice about those meetings is that not only do they share with you what they view about the issue, but they also can point you to a different direction of where to take your advocacy next. I think that's always, again, advocacy is about listening and responding to what you hear.

**[00:26:57.050] - Caden**

This next one, personalized messages from constituents. We always put the emphasis on personalized as well because the template emails can be effective, they come from organizations like us. We provide a template and make it really easy for you. What really makes a difference is changing up those messages with your own story. Those will get read and responded to. I think



it's intuitive, right? If you are in the office of a member of Congress's and you receive 15 of the same message, that has a a little bit less of an impact than someone sharing some of that message and then some of their own personal story tied in with it.

**[00:27:35.620] - Caden**

We always encourage you as much as possible to personalize your email messages and communications when you're encouraging offices to take action as much as possible.

**[00:27:47.100] - Caden**

Then, of course, you see in-person town hall meetings and telephone town hall meetings really making a difference as well. But ultimately, elected officials place a really high value on groups and citizens that have built those relationships with the elected official and their staff over time. How do you do that? Is you meet with them and you stay in regular contact with them.

**[00:28:09.260] - Caden**

All right. The next question here is, I'll just read it out loud. If your member or senator has not or already arrived at a firm decision on an issue, how much influence might the following advocacy strategies directed to the Washington office have on his or her decision? And so ultimately, the takeaway here is that direct constituent interactions, so direct interactions directly between us and the offices that represent us, have more influence than other advocacy strategies. Those in-person visits on things like Capitol Hill Day that mentor puts on each year are especially effective. But you all are in Maryland, DC. You have access to Washington, DC, and the capital more so certainly than the entire rest of the country, really.

**[00:28:56.830] - Caden**

And so you're able to do those federal meetings, I think, a lot easier. But virtual meetings really are a thing, too. That's one thing I actually didn't put this question in these slides, but one thing that's changed a lot as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic is that offices, just in general, a lot more open to having virtual calls, virtual Zoom meetings. And so you don't have to go to Capitol Hill to have those meetings. You don't have to go to Annapolis or to downtown DC to advocate. You can have them virtually. And a lot of times, it's a preferred as well by the offices.

**[00:29:32.260] - Caden**



But again, in-person visits are especially effective. Contact from representatives of groups, again, is especially helpful. Those individualized email messages really make a difference. Postal letters, I'd say, are not as effective anymore, but they're rare. So I guess if you're receiving a postal letter, you might pay special attention to it. And then again, like I was mentioning before, those local media placings can make a really big difference.

**[00:30:00.370] - Caden**

Phone calls, we always encourage folks to... When we're especially trying to get attention around a legislative issue, making that phone call can really make a difference.

**[00:30:09.340] - Caden**

There are people within Congressional offices who write down the responses that they hear and the advocacy that they hear in those phone calls. And similarly in the offices of representatives in Annapolis or in DC, they do the same thing. And so they can really make a big difference in advocating for the issue that you care about.

**[00:30:29.270] - Caden**

And one last thing I want to note here is that you'll see last year, these last two things, four email messages. I'm not going to talk about that again. 56% today makes some positive influence, but ultimately not a huge significant influence.

**[00:30:42.970] - Caden**

But this right here, this piece, visit from a lobbyist. You see 83% say it's at least somewhat important, but a lot of positive influence, what? That's maybe 10%. That's why I always say that myself as a lobbyist in Washington DC matters, but not as much as a visit from you all does. You all really make a difference. Again, these offices want to hear directly from their constituents because they want to understand how the issue is impacting their specific community. I can talk a little bit about how these issues can impact Washington DC, as a DC resident.

**[00:31:18.950] - Caden**

I can maybe even talk about it a little bit as a former resident of Las Vegas or Reno or of PG County. But I cannot talk about how these issues really effectively can impact Eastern Shore, Maryland or Baltimore City, or Western Maryland. It's just not where I have experience myself.



And so I can share data from those places. I can share polling from those places, but I can't share the personal experience from those places and what I see. And that's where you all are especially valuable is seeing or sharing what you see every single day and how you think these policies would positively impact the young people within your community.

**[00:31:59.050] - Caden**

All right. Let's keep going. And this is the last of these graphs. I want to talk about how the content of your message really matters. So elected officials are always looking for certain information when they are receiving a message from an advocate. They are looking for the number of constituents that are affected. They're looking for things like estimated economic impact, if there's any, and they're looking to hear success stories from your community. They want to see data. So they want to hear about the impact that your program is having, how many young people you serve, how many volunteers you have, what are the outcomes that are coming from the programming that you're putting on for the young people in your community.

**[00:32:41.780] - Caden**

Ultimately, citizen advocates are much more influential and contribute to better public policy when they're sharing personalized and that local information to officials. So that's really what you're seeing in this graph here. So the question here is, how helpful is it for messages from constituents to include the following? And how frequently do messages from constituents include the following? And I think just this dichotomy between the two is really stark, right? So this first one here, information about the impact of the bill, about how the impact--

**[00:33:15.570] - Caden**

About the impact the bill would have on the district or the state. 91% of the staff say that that is very helpful or helpful. They really, really want to hear that information, but only 9% of the time do they hear it frequently enough. And so that tells you that bringing that type of information of the impact that it would have on your specific region or city or state is where you can make a really big difference.

**[00:33:43.420] - Caden**

Secondly, the constituent's reasons for supporting or opposing the bill. You see 90% of offices say it's very helpful or helpful, and they receive it about 50% of the time. That's useful. It's there. It's just the right direction. But I think ultimately You want to make sure that when you're going to



these meetings, you're talking about the reason that you support or oppose it. You want to be really, really specific with your ask. We'll talk about what that looks like in just a moment. But you want to come in there. You don't want to just lollygag and talk about what you do as a program. You want to go in there with a specific purpose. You want to go in and you say, I want you to do this for me, and this is why. Here's why it'll make a difference. You want to tell a story about the impact that it would make. That's this last option here on the bar graph. Is It's a personal story related to the biller issue. You see that 79% of offices find it very helpful or helpful, but only 18% of people come to these meetings or share messages that include a personal story. Again, those personal stories make a really big difference, and we do not do it enough, really.

#### **[00:34:51.120] - Caden**

All right. We want to talk now about some of the elements of effective advocacy messaging. Then after that, we're going to go into some breakout groups and we're going to practice. Just doing a quick time check. We are good. All right. Another sip of coffee.

#### **[00:35:10.490] - Caden**

First of all, just some advocacy communication best practices. First, as I just mentioned, you want to have a specific ask and clear goal in mind. You want to be really clear with what you want the office to achieve for you or do for you. You want to discuss the impacts, the the importance and the urgency of whatever you're advocating for to the constituents or to them, for your constituents and the people that the bill would impact. You want to communicate with a lens that would appeal to their perspective and passion. Again, this is why it's important to listen to what the elected official in their office has to say and the issues that they care about. Then you always want to connect to humans, too. This is where the personal story comes in. You want to have some an emotional appeal that kinda tugs at the heartstrings a little bit as well.

#### **[00:36:03.880] - Caden**

So when you are developing your ask, we have here just some different things that you can actually ask for, so what an office can do for you. On the left side, you see the ideal, so that's asks that actually lead to a policy change. And on the right side, you see relationship building asks. So these are different things that offices can do for you that ultimately can lead to achieving those policy goals. So on the left side, you'll see introducing or voting for a piece of legislation. They can send a letter to a government agency about a specific concern. They can sign on to official



letters for you in support of something. They can help you find or gather information from agencies and research services.

**[00:36:44.450] - Caden**

I always take just a second to talk about this one a little bit. There are actually staff within members of Congress offices that can help gather information for you and to solve problems. There are caseworkers to help you do that and so I don't think people realize that a a lot of times, but there are people within those offices to help you navigate the government bureaucracy. If you ever run into issues with applying for a federal grant or gathering information, you have people to help you within your representative's office. Then, of course, they can always submit an official statement to the record.

**[00:37:20.290] - Caden**

Then here on the right side are the relationship building asks. You can always go to your meetings and say, Hey, I lead this really great school-based mentoring program within our district, and I would love for you to come and visit them. That's called a site visit. A lot of times these site visits will allow the elected official to see the work happening right in front of them, and again, can eventually lead to them doing something really tangible in support of your type of programming. You can write articles or they can write articles for your newsletter. You can spotlight them in your newsletter or for local national media. I think sharing a message on social media is always really great. I love MENTOR's National Capitol Hill Day each year when we see elected officials taking pictures with the advocates and sharing it on social media. Just a really great visual way to show their support for the mentoring movement. They can also make a speech on the floor of the House or the Senate, and then can always hold a town hall as well with the community on the issue.

**[00:38:21.610] - Caden**

But it's important to keep in mind there are people--

**[00:38:23.240] - Renee**

Okay, we have a question in the chat: what are dear colleagues' letters? Can you give an example?

**[00:38:29.240] - Caden**



Yes, good question. A Dear Colleague Letter, what that really means is just an official form of communication. This is how members of Congress and elected officials in state legislatures across the country officially communicate with each other. So one example of this is that we have members of Congress in the House and the Senate that lead a dear colleague letter in support of a certain amount of funding for the Youth Mentoring Grant each year. So this last year, it was at \$130 million. We worked with the offices to write out that letter, and then they take the letter and they distribute it among all the elected officials within the House and the Senate and try to gain signatures for it. What that does is that demonstrates the amount of people and the breadth and the depth of support for that specific funding ask. Then you can deliver that dear colleague letter to the committees that make the decisions on the actual appropriation for that funding stream for the Youth Venturing Grant. That's one example of it.

**[00:39:29.090] - Caden**

You also see write dear colleague letters for issues that folks are seeing within the government. If they see the Department of Education the way that they're handling a specific program, they will, again, write a dear colleague letter and get other folks to cosign it and then send it along to the Department of Education and to the appropriate committees. That's a dear colleague letter. Just an official communication, basically.

**[00:39:59.270] - Caden**

All right. A couple of things to not ask for. You don't want to really ever go into meetings and say anything related to support for their campaign or money. What I mean by that is by being like, Hey, Senator Warnock, you're really great. I support your campaign. I contributed a bunch of money, and I knocked on doors for you, so you should support the Foster Youth Mentoring Act. Big no-no. You want to keep those two things very separate. Actually, if you say something like that in the meeting, a lot of times they will get a little bit uncomfortable or will not really respond. Just a big no-no, generally, the policy here, for lack of a better word, is to keep the politics, so the actual electoral side of things, and the policy separate. And so don't ask for money or support for a campaign or anything like that. Also, don't go in and ask for a specific business favor. It's okay if you want to talk about earmarks or something like that, congressional project spending, that's all good. But stay on topic with the thing that you're advocating for generally, especially if you're in a group with other advocates as well. Just keep that in mind as you identify what your clear ask is going to be.

**[00:41:22.840] - Caden**



Okay, let's talk a little bit about the impact piece of this. Research data and talking points. My mom is a librarian, and she sent me this graphic, and so I know it's a really good one. It's about how to spot fake news or really this information or misinformation. Just a couple of tips here. This is really important because you want to make sure that the information that you're sharing with elected officials is true. Because if it's not true or if it's disproven, then I promise you they're not going to take you seriously in the future. There are just some tips on here for different ways to make sure the information that you're looking at is accurate. Things like considering the source of the information. I think that we all have in the past, this even happened to me recently, I fell victim to a tweet on the internet, and I was like, Is this really true? I dug into it and figured it out. But I think it's really important, especially before you share this information publicly with other people, that you make sure it's absolutely accurate.

**[00:42:27.160] - Caden**

So considering the source, reading me on the headline, checking with supporting sources or other outlets reporting on this, too, checking the date of the information. We've all fallen for the onion version of satire before, too, but making sure that it's not a joke. Don't share that on your article with the office of your elected official. I promise they probably wouldn't take you very seriously after that. But you can always, at the end of the day, ask the experts. Ask your local librarians, ask my mom to make sure and confirm that the information that you're looking at can be fact-checked and is correct.

**[00:43:07.380] - Caden**

Then there are organizations that you could trust out there to get talking points, to get research, to get good information that you can pass on and share. I'm here to tell you the MENTOR is one of them. We have a really great website that I'll share with you. Let's see, can I share it now? No, I'll share it with you later in the chat. But we have an issue-specific advocacy resources page that goes through every different issue that touches on mentoring and has talking points and resources that are evidence and research-based that you can take and implement into your own messaging.

**[00:43:41.920] - Caden**

We encourage you to do that not only with mentoring, but figure out the other organizations that you trust as well within other issues that you care about. There's a lot of them out there who are doing really great work. If you find organizations that you can trust, then it's okay to really repeat their messaging because it's, again, creating that collective impact. Be sure to research the



officials that you're advocating to as well before you communicate with them. So Mentor has a legislative scorecard on [mentoring.org/advocacy](http://mentoring.org/advocacy). What's cool about the scorecard is that you can go in and look at all the elected officials within your state or region, and you can see if they support our different bills. Do they support the Foster Youth Mentoring Act? Have they supported our dear colleague letter for the Youth Mentoring Grant in the past? All that stuff is there.

#### **[00:44:29.740] - Caden**

Why that's important is because you don't want to go into a meeting or advocate for something that they're already doing. What you want to do is you want to thank them for supporting the Foster Youth Mentoring Act and say, Thank you for doing that. Here's another way that you can support the mentoring movement. So just figuring out what they already support is really helpful.

#### **[00:44:49.810] - Caden**

Google is our friend when it comes to research in general, but especially in advocacy work. Doing something like typing in the elected official's name with keywords like mentoring to see if they talked it in the past or if they have experience with the issue in the past is another way that you can get some of that information. Then looking for connections based off of their life experience. I'll say that some of our best advocates for mentoring, we have gotten to because they were on the board of a Big Brothers, Big Sisters chapter, or they ran a Boys and Girls Club. They supported after-school programs in the past. Their wife is a teacher. All these different things can be especially helpful and finding those connections can be really helpful for you to get in. I'll also say that that elected official or the staff that you're meeting with is going to be impressed by you doing your research and will note it, that you're serious about what you're advocating for, and will really allow you to take your conversation to the next level. Do that research in advance. It always really helps. Then as much as possible, bring data of your impact. I talked about this a little bit before, but you want to bring information on the constituents that are affected, success stories from your community, the outcomes that are coming from your programming, all that stuff really makes a difference, along with storytelling, which is what we're going to do now.

#### **[00:46:15.460] - Caden**

Again, I always tell people that the two most important things when you want to be effective at advocacy messaging are that research and evidence piece and impact and telling your story. These are some questions that can help shape your personal story, which we're going to practice in a a little bit. Why did you become an advocate for this issue? How does the issue you're



advocating for affect you or affect your community? Then do you have friends or family or clients or customers, mentees, mentors, families that you've impacted that have compelling stories that you can lift up and share within your advocacy messaging? Always keep these messages in mind. Now we're going to practice just a little bit. I think you're up on the chat. So your personal story. We're going to give you just a few minutes now to think back to the issue that you brought up in our icebreaker originally. So whatever issue that was, you're going to talk about why that issue is important for you in your personal story, and then you're going to share that in breakout groups. So right now, just take a few minutes to write down a few sentences about why you care about this issue. Personally, and then we'll move you into breakout rooms, and you'll share and do that pitch within that space. I have an example here that I'll read aloud, which is: "I decided to become an advocate for mentoring because I personally experienced how a school-based mentoring program helped me get on track academically and eventually become the first in my family to enroll in college. My mentor helped me gain positive outlets, connections, and motivation to stay engaged in my academics. I want to be able to get to others, the relationships that helped get me to where I am today. Unfortunately, my program has a waitlist. So if you increase funding for youth mentoring, more organizations like mine can benefit. And that's why I ask that you support increasing funding for youth mentoring."

**[00:48:11.370] - Caden**

See here within this story, in this example, it has a specific ask at the end, and it shares the story of how they were impacted, what it's allowed them to do, the issue and the problem at hand. It shares that there is a little bit of data, which is that there's a waitlist for their program, and it combines that all into one really effective and persuasive message.

**[00:48:33.140] - Caden**

Now, I'm going to give you just a few minutes to go ahead and write out your personal story. You can take five minutes to do that. Maybe at 12:03, we'll move back into breakout rooms. Does that sound good, Renee?

**[00:48:50.960] - Renee**

Yes. So the breakout rooms will be there automatically. And how long should they be in the rooms?

**[00:48:57.920] - Caden**



Let's see. Let's do eight minutes in the rooms. Okay, perfect. Yeah, let's do eight minutes. Or let's do 10 minutes in the rooms.

**[00:49:08.090] - Renee**

Okay.

**[00:49:09.170] - Caden**

All right. So five minutes of... 1:03-ish, you will be moving to your rooms. Cool. Thanks, everyone. Excited to hear your pitches.

**[00:49:18.870] - Rebecca**

Always close by when I'm on the computer.

**[00:49:21.870] - Caden**

Yeah, I remember those days when I had a cat. All right, I think we are all back. So I hope folks found that practice useful. Is there anyone that wants to come off mute and volunteer to give their pitch? I would love for a couple of brave advocates to share, if you're willing, maybe two or three folks. Anyone want to volunteer?

**[00:49:59.350] - Rebecca**

I would be Happy to go. I will say my group did we discussed ways that this could be bettered. I'll say this with a grain of salt. I said: "I started working at the age of 16, which opened me up to multiple opportunities. It gave me structure outside of school, provided me with interpersonal and professional skills, and provided me with a network of adults who cared about my success. There are over 4 million youth in the U.S. Who are disconnected from both work and school and thus do not have a vision of what their future could look like or an ability to practice the skills that would benefit them in adulthood. By increasing incentives for businesses to hire young people, you could provide more opportunities for young people to connect with the professional world and start working towards their futures."

**[00:50:56.320] - Caden**

Thank you for sharing, Rebecca. Great job. I love there was a specific ask there at the end. You talked about your own personal experiences and some information and data to really back up why



were you advocating for matters that would make a difference. So check, check, and check. Great job. Anyone else want to come off mute and share? I don't bite.

**[00:51:29.920] - Caden**

All right. No worries. I know I saw it. I could see the mics, you all were participating in the breakout room, so no big deal. But thanks to everyone for practicing, sharing our personal story. I hope that this is something that you can think about and keep in mind when you are doing any advocacy messaging, whether it's an actual pitch and meeting in person or whether that's writing an email or sharing something on social media, whether that's writing an op-ed. These lessons really apply across the board, no matter what you're advocating for. I hope you found that helpful. In our last few minutes here, we're going to talk about Advocacy August, and then I'll just open it up to Q&A to folks to ask me whatever they want to. We're in our last three days now of Advocacy August, but I just wanted to share overall what the campaign is about in some ways that you can take action these last couple of days.

**[00:52:33.420] - Caden**

Each year, Mentor manages what's called the Advocacy August campaign. We do so to encourage youth mentoring advocates to get inspired, to increase their skills, and to take action in support of policy that would increase mentoring opportunities for young people.

**[00:52:47.810] - Caden**

This year, the focus has been on sharing advocacy wins, on voter engagement, given that we're in an election year, and on increasing participation to advocates for them to become what we call any advocates in states across the country.

**[00:53:05.990] - Caden**

So throughout this month, we've released a lot of new resources and blogs. I'm really excited that later on today, we'll be releasing a really big new resource that I'll talk about in just a second. But these were our main calls to action.

**[00:53:18.980] - Caden**

On August 12th, we held a workshop called Effective Strategies for Election Year Impact. What that was all about is how, as an organization, you can then get involved with voter registration



and voter engagement efforts, what the rules are for 501(C)(3) nonprofits so that you don't have the IRS coming up after you and telling you that you broke some rules and you were too partisan or something like that. So that's something that you're interested in getting your organization involved with, I encourage you to watch the recording from that webinar, it was very informational.

**[00:53:52.360] - Caden**

We have an action alert, as always, that I will demonstrate how you can participate in in just a second. But that's writing to and tagging your elected official on social media. If you'd like to advocating for supporting policies to increase youth mentoring opportunities, you can always get there for mentoring. If there is a mayor within your state that is doing a really great job in leading mentoring initiatives, whether that is working directly with programs to recruit, whether that's their offering time off to volunteer a mentor every week, whatever that looks like, we would love to hear about it. You can nominate your mayor at the link that's provided and will be sent out, and we'll take that and respond.

**[00:54:41.210] - Caden**

Then we have so many new resources and blogs that were shared throughout this month. If you go to [mentoring.org/blog](https://mentoring.org/blog), you can see some of them. We spotlight elected officials. We heard from a youth participant in Capitol Hill Day. We had an agent of change talk about how she's leading a coalition of organizations in Phoenix, Arizona. All really good stuff. We are releasing later on today a site visit guide, so if you're interested in conducting a site visit over the next coming months, this is a really great time of year and year in general to have site visits. The reason why is because elected officials are mostly at home.

**[00:55:21.060] - Caden**

The work is done over the next couple of months. They are working on campaigning and trying to earn your vote for the upcoming election in November and so this is a great time to out to elected officials and encourage them to come to an event that your program is putting on or to come and do an actual visit of your location, whatever that looks like to you. Timing-wise, it's just a great opportunity to do that.

**[00:55:46.000] - Caden**

Then lastly, I'm really excited to share that later on today, we're going to be releasing what's called our Agent of Change Advocacy Guide. This is a comprehensive resource of everything that you



need to know to get started in your advocacy work. It goes through the basics of governments, it goes through the basics of advocacy, it talks about advocacy messaging, it talks about all the different ways that you can take action, and it's written in a guidebook. There's written text, there's key terms and definitions.

**[00:56:13.590] - Caden**

It's taken a lot of mentors other our other resources as well, our talking points, our toolkits, and combined it all into one document that's going to be aligned with our Advocate Academy, which is our training courses that's being redesigned and will be released next year. Really excited to share that. Keep your eye out for your email to take in that information.

**[00:56:38.610] - Caden**

Then lastly here, I'm just going to show you how you can use our Action Center. I'm going to encourage you all to log on to [mentoring.org/advocacy](https://mentoring.org/advocacy), which I'll put in the chat right now. Type pretty fast here. There we go.

**[00:56:56.420] - Caden**

I'm also going to share my screen again... To show you how our Action Center works. When you go to [mentoring.org/advocacy](https://mentoring.org/advocacy), this is the main web page and you scroll down just a little bit, you see this big banner that says Action Center. So at any given time, you're going to have a number of campaigns that are listed on here that you can write about. Usually, there will be things like, Support the Foster Youth Mentoring Act, the Youth Workforce Readiness Act, Support School-Based Mentoring. Right now, there is just the Advocacy August 2024 campaign.

**[00:57:37.720] - Caden**

So if you click on that right there, it might remember me. Oh, it didn't get. Okay, so bring up this box for you to fill out your information, which you can type in. And then after you hit review your message, it's going to bring up a template email that includes all the different policy asks that we're encouraging grassroots advocates to advocate for this month. You can edit that message as you see fit. If you just did your pitch about advocating for youth mentoring, you can probably even copy paste that information and add it into the template message. It will place you with the elected officials based off of the address that you enter in. So it'll connect you directly with your elected officials, and then you click send. And so it really is max five minutes that really makes a difference for you to advocate to your elected officials and really get our message out there.



**[00:58:35.580] - Caden**

One other thing that I wanted to show you in our Action Center, I brought this up earlier, but our scorecard. If you go right here, this little widget that says scorecard, and you click View Scorecard. You can scroll down a little bit and you can see every senator and then every member of the House of Representatives is listed on here. Then you can see each of our different priorities on here as well. You can see if they've supported our asks in the past. You take a look at Alma Adams, for example, and you can see what she has supported and co-sponsored and what she has not supported yet.

**[00:59:10.110] - Caden**

This tells you the things that you actually want to advocate for, the things that you want them to do for us. You can see past congresses as well. A similar view, last thing I'll show you, is you can click and just see overall who signed the dear colleague letter in support of the Youth Mentoring Grant. You can see who signed it and who led it as well. If you want a larger view of all the elected officials and who supports it and who is not so far. Just wanted to show folks that.

**[00:59:43.250] - Caden**

But that's pretty much all I have, except for some additional resources that I'll make sure that you receive over email. If anyone has any questions, I'm happy to answer them. If not, I am always available for questions, and I hope that you found this valuable, and I hope you certainly engage with our events and advocacy activities coming up.

**[01:00:07.480] - Caden**

Hope to see you at Capitol Hill Day as well. Registration for that will be opening November 1st. So, yeah, that's all I got today. Any questions for me?

**[01:00:17.560] - Speaker 3**

Thank you. This has been very helpful. Thank you.

**[01:00:24.400] - Renee**

Yeah, Caden, there's been a lot of love for you already in the chat. I spoke to you, I think, early, but if you have any questions, feel free to come off mute or drop in the chat. I think if Caden is



available. We'll make sure you get all this information to you all, as well as your contact information, Caden, and all the links and stuff. Yeah, this has been great. I learned a lot. I've known Caden and been around him for a while. There's still new things to learn. Being able to see where everybody signed and stuff was really cool. See how far all the advocacy efforts of MENTOR that's come. Yeah, thank you, Caden.

**[01:00:59.660] - Renee**

Thank you, everyone, for coming. This recording will also be on our MENTOR Maryland | DC YouTube in the coming week. So if you want to share with any colleagues who were not able to be here and maybe work through some of the activities with your colleagues, you can have the opportunity to do that. But, yeah, thanks, everybody, for coming and making time for us. It's raining and thundering, and I think people are having issues. So thank you for everybody who held out to the end. But, yeah, thanks, everybody.

**[01:01:27.820] - Caden**

All right. Have a good one, you all. Stay dry.

**[01:01:30.120] - Renee**

Happy Holiday weekend as well. Thanks, you all.

**[01:01:32.060] - Caden**

Happy holiday weekend! Bye-bye.