

ALL YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT LOBBYING BUT WERE AFRAID TO ASK MAHB SPRING CERTIFICATE PROGRAM 2025



MAHB

Assisting Massachusetts Boards of Health through
training, technical assistance and legal education



DISCLAIMER

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- This information is provided for educational purposes only and is not to be construed as legal advice.
- MAHBB does not enter into attorney-client relationships.

QUESTIONS TO BE ANSWERED

- What is lobbying?
- How do lobbying and advocacy differ?
- How do lobbying and providing education differ?



LOBBYING IS NOT A “DIRTY WORD”

- It is often misunderstood.
- It is our “civic duty.”
- Our taxes pay our legislators’ salary.
 - Marjorie Taylor Greene’s (R-Ga) comments:
 - Federal workers “don’t deserve” their paychecks.
 - “Those jobs are not real jobs... Those jobs are paid for by the American tax people, who work real jobs...”



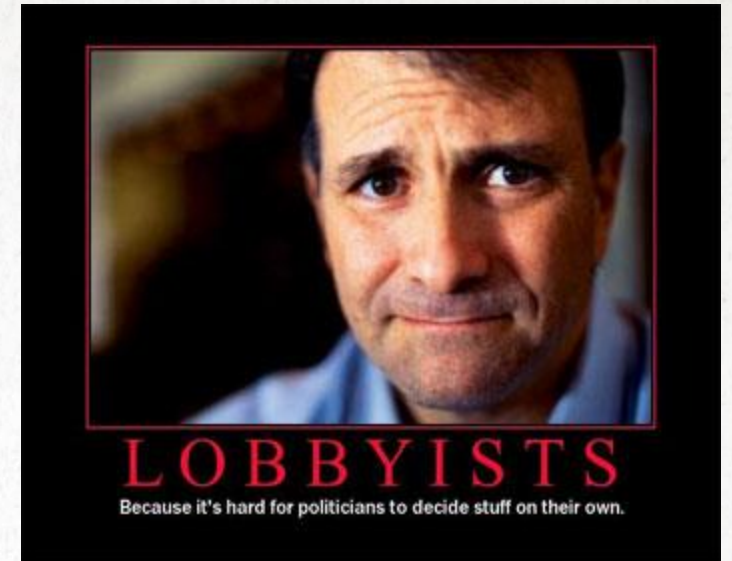
SHE'S RIGHT. LEGISLATORS ARE PUBLIC SERVANTS

- We DO pay their salaries with our tax dollars.
- In consideration, we expect them to:
 - Enact laws, including budgets
 - Provide constituent services
 - Listen to our expectations of them, including positions we have on what we want them to do.
 - What policies would we want enacted.
 - What policies do we think are bad, and don't want them to enact.
- It is our **CIVIC DUTY** to lobby for our beliefs and expectations.



DEFINITION OF LOBBYING

- Any verbal or written communication with a legislator or government official (Commissioner of Public Health) **if and only if:**
 - You refer to a specific piece of legislation (HB 4502); and
 - You express a position of such legislation.
 - You ask them to take an action on it.
 - **While you are working.**



TYPES OF LOBBYING WHILE YOU ARE WORKING OR BEING PAID

- **Direct Lobbying:**
 - “Please consider voting in favor of HB 4502 which codifies the changes urged by the Special Commission on Local & Reg. Public Health.”
 - “I am asking you to vote in favor of HB XXXX, which would ban the sale of tobacco in Massachusetts.”
- **Call to Action Lobbying:**
 - Writing a letter to the editor telling readers to contact legislators and ask them to support or oppose specific bill.
 - Asking volunteers to call their legislators and ask them to support or oppose a specific bill.
 - Dropping flyers at legislative offices urging legislators to support a specific piece of legislation (HB 4502 – SAPHE 2.0).



DEFINITION OF EDUCATION AND PUBLIC HEALTH ADVOCACY

- Process of attempting to bring about change on behalf of a particular public health goal, program, interest, or population.
- Educating policymakers and the public about evidence-based policies.
 - NOT specific pieces of legislation with bill numbers.
- Talking to a legislator about the social impact of laws that increase access to PH programs in general.



IMPORTANCE OF EDUCATION AND PUBLIC HEALTH ADVOCACY

- Intrinsic in enhancing specific public health goals, programs, and interests.
- Provides legislators and government officials with studies and research supporting public health goals.
 - Epidemiologists draft a paper outlining youth smoking rates in low income rural and urban areas v. high income suburbs.
- Perfectly fine to address issues relevant to a bill.
 - Just not the specific bill.
 - Educating educators that youth are attracted to and use flavored tobacco products lead to passage of law banning flavored tobacco products.



WHEN LOBBYING IS PERMITTED AND ENCOURAGED!

- On your own time.
- Civic Engagement
 - Get involved in state and local electoral activities.
 - Support or challenge the approval of specific state ballot measures.
 - Seek to influence government officials within the state executive branch regarding specific laws, including specific budget proposals.
 - Advocate for, oppose, or impact particular specific bill.
 - Including the governor's decision to approve or veto any legislation.
- Always advocate for and educate about the importance of proactive public health measures.



WHEN YOU ARE AT WORK, WHEN ARE YOU NOT “ON THE JOB”

- **Lunch time and breaks**
 - Not “on the job”
- **When you are “on the job”**
 - If asked by the majority of a legislative committee or commission to testify, you can.
 - Joint Committee on Public Health
 - Public Health Commissioner was asked to testify.



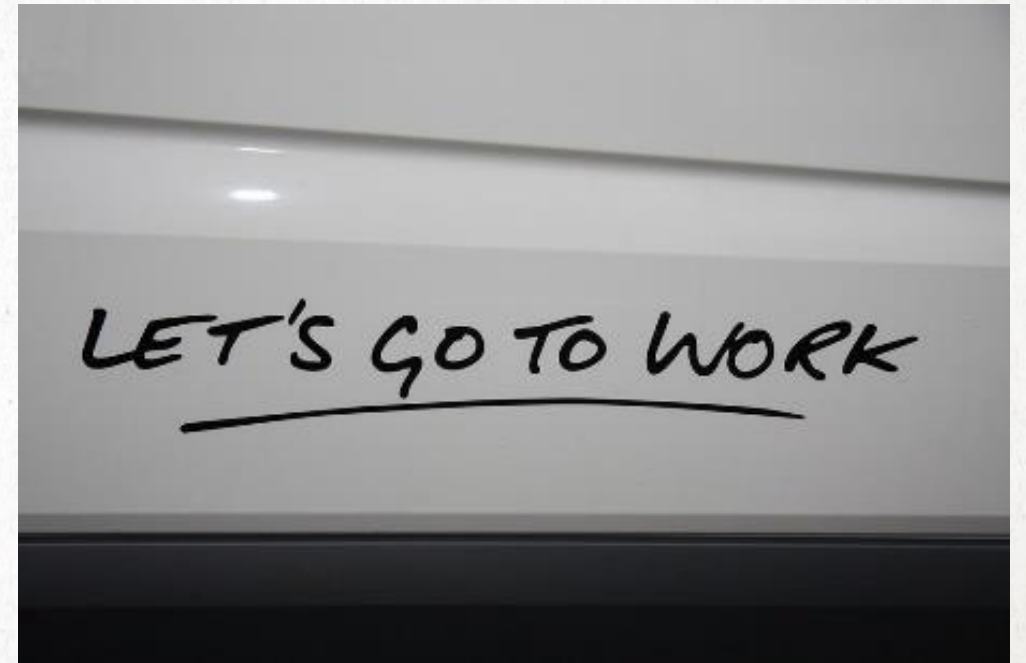
EXAMPLES OF EDUCATING AND ADVOCATING AS PART OF YOUR JOB

- Distribute fact sheets about tobacco industry marketing of flavored tobacco products.
- Public education campaigns to educate the public about public health issues.
- Provide education to legislators and executive officials (governor) about public health issues, including maternal and child health initiatives, vaccine acceptance, tobacco cessation programs...
- Visiting editorial boards, contacting reporters, writing letters to the editor, and providing reporters with research findings on public health issues, not on specific bills.



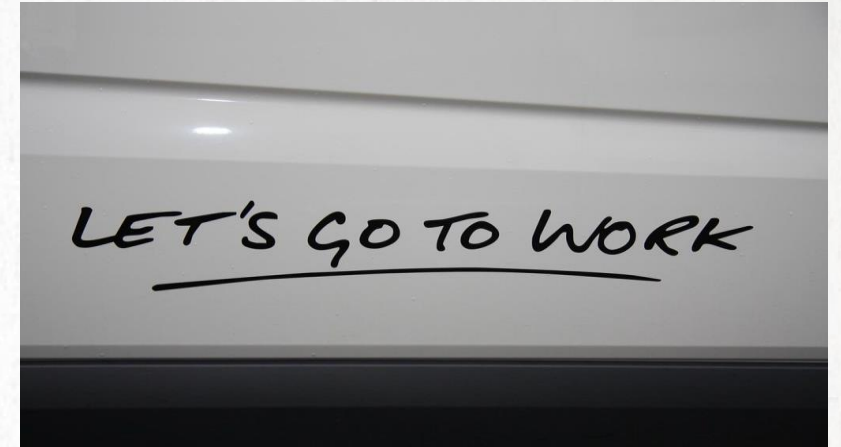
EXAMPLES OF EDUCATING AND ADVOCATING AS PART OF YOUR JOB (CONT)

- Making educational presentations to civic and community groups about public health issues.
- If is FINE to discuss issues relevant to a bill, JUST NOT THE SPECIFIC BILL.
- These activities can and should occur before and after a bill is filed.



WHAT IF A LEGISLATOR ASKS ME WHAT I THINK OF A PARTICULAR BILL DURING THE VISIT?

- Tell the legislator that you are visiting to express your concerns about tobacco, mental health, adolescent depression, etc. issues.
- Refer the legislator to the MPHA and explain that they are our lobbying affiliate.
- Do *not* be embarrassed to say, “I am not a lobbyist, I am here to share information with you and answer any questions you may have to the best of my ability, as someone with lived experience.”



WHO DO WE ADVOCATE TO AS BOARDS OF HEALTH?

- “All politics is local...”
 - Selectboards, city councils, town meetings, town managers, and mayors are our primary subjects
 - Municipal Constituent Groups/Party Committees
- State Legislators
 - We may be invited to give testimony to House, Senate or Joint Committees at legislative hearings
 - MPHA Events at the Statehouse
 - Participating in political town halls
- Federal Delegation
 - Participating in organized “Hill Days” with NACCHO, NALBOH
 - Participation in briefings



MAKE YOUR MESSAGING RELEVANT AND RELATABLE

- Our message is complex and subject to misinterpretation
- Confusing to most people who:
 - Conflate the role of *healthcare* with *public health*
 - Struggle with grasping basics of how preventive approaches work
 - Naturally assume that health outcomes are strictly a function of individual health behaviors
- These popularly held mindsets make it hard for people to understand *what public health does*, how it approaches health issues and why it is essential to society's prosperity and wellbeing.



FRAMING THE ISSUE TO REORIENT THE MESSAGE TO SHOW WHY P.H. MATTERS AND HOW IT WORKS

Begin by painting an expansive view of public health. When people assume that health is simply the absence of illness, it's easy to conclude that the main society-wide strategy for managing health is better health care. This way of thinking leaves public health approaches out of the mental picture.

- **INSTEAD OF SAYING:**

- By *investing* in public health, we can *prevent* chronic diseases like heart disease, stroke, and diabetes.

- **FRAME YOUR STATEMENT AS:**

- By *supporting* our public health agencies, we can *promote* greater physical, mental, and social health in our communities.
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FRAMING THE ISSUE TO REORIENT THE MESSAGE TO SHOW WHY P.H. MATTERS AND HOW IT WORKS - 2

Find a good example of how prevention works and use it often. It's notoriously hard to communicate the value of prevention: hard to demonstrate the impact of something that *didn't* happen! *Concrete examples* can help people grasp how public health works. *Choose one that's unlikely to be controversial or polarizing and use it to introduce your work, setting the stage for topics that may be more difficult.*

- Before you say:
 - Public health works to prevent health and safety issues by taking a four-step approach: define the problem, identify risk and protective factors, develop and test prevention strategies, and ensure widespread adoption.
- Try framing it like this:
 - To improve safety at a broad scale, public health looks for ways to prevent injuries. One example is restricting new drivers from the most dangerous situations-like driving at night-until they have gained experience.

USE TESTED METAPHORS TO DIRECT ATTENTION TO DIFFERENT ASPECTS OF PUBLIC HEALTH

When you need to

Try using this easily understood metaphor

Explain the value of public health collaboration with other sectors like health care, education, or housing...

Compare cross-sector collaborations to **building the foundation of community wellbeing**, with each sector laying parts of it, and all sectors depending on the results.

Demystify the need for public health data and informatics and justify their value ...

Compare public health data to the **GPS Systems and gages we rely on for driving**. Collecting, compiling, and displaying the data is complicated, behind-the-scenes work that benefits us all.

USE TESTED METAPHORS TO DIRECT ATTENTION TO DIFFERENT ASPECTS OF PUBLIC HEALTH - 2

When you need to

Try using this easily understood metaphor

Explain the vital role of public health monitoring and surveillance

Compare public health to an airline **ground crew** that performs specific, routine checks to ensure collective safety.

Build support for public health approaches that apply policy levers to improve social and living Conditions...

Compare negative influences or risk factors to forms of **pressure** that affect everyone in a community, and portray public health approaches as ways to relieve that pressure.

Get an anti-vaxxer to understand how/why vaccines work...

Your Turn!! GIVE US A COMPARISON...

ANY QUESTIONS?

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