



South Carolina
Institute of Medicine & Public Health
HEALTH POLICY FELLOWS
Program

SOUTH CAROLINA OFFICE OF
RURAL HEALTH
Investment. Opportunity. Health.

Engaging Your Elected Officials

Interacting with your policymakers is an effective strategy used by community members to influence policy change. This can take the form of letter writing, phone calls and participating in hearings. It is important to remember to be specific when you are speaking to your elected officials.

LETTER WRITING

Letter writing is one of the most effective ways to engage. Letters give you the opportunity to provide a clear explanation of a public health problem and its effect on your local community.

Remember to use proper greetings such as “Honorable [Name]” or “Councilman [Last Name]” or “Councilwoman [Last Name].”

ENGAGING YOUR COMMUNITY

Community events and coalition meetings

- As a constituent of your elected leaders, you have the chance to inform and educate them on issues within your community and neighborhood. For example, you can invite them to attend community events or to come to an event your coalition is hosting.

Board composition

- Invite your policymakers to serve on your advisory committees and leadership boards. Elected officials are community members, too. This is a great way for them to stay connected to the work.

Social media

- Most elected officials are on social media. Following their social media presence makes it easy to follow along their journey. If you're hosting an event or want to share key pieces of information, tag your councilperson to ensure they see it.





CALLING YOUR ELECTED OFFICIALS

A phone call to your representative is another effective form of communication that fosters dialogue about new policies. It is an opportunity to explain how public issues affect you and your neighbors.

REQUESTING 1-ON-1 MEETINGS

Identify and find your elected officials

- **Dillon County:**
www.dilloncountysc.org/leadership/county-council/
- **Williamsburg County:**
www.williamsburgcounty.sc.gov/184/County-Council
- **Darlington County:**
www.darcountsc.com/government/county_council/index.php
- **Barnwell County:**
www.barnwellcountysc.us/173/Council
- **Lee County:**
www.leecountysc.org/county_council/council_members.php
- **Georgetown County:**
www.gtcounty.org/291/County-Council

The Council Clerk and County Administrator can be instrumental when reaching out to your elected officials. Their contact information can be found on your county's website or can be retrieved by calling your county administration building.

PARTICIPATE IN PUBLIC COMMENT PERIODS

A public comment period is the select timeframe allotted for you to submit input to county council before a decision is made. Your county council will invite constituents to participate in a public comment period when a new policy decision is proposed.

Elected officials are often receptive when voters are present to voice their input regarding policy proposals. Participating in public comment periods is an opportunity to get the attention of your representatives. Providing testimony or submitting written comments on the policy or topic is an opportunity to utilize your knowledge and expertise.

Testimony Action Steps

- Visit your county website to determine the appropriate public hearing for the topic.
- Develop a testimony, or a short speech. Most public hearings allow two or three minutes of comment. Data points can be used to enhance the argument.
- It can be helpful to print off your comments prior to testifying.
- Individuals may want to include supplemental materials to enhance their testimony. Supplemental materials should be given to the clerk or staff person.

