

LEGISLATIVE RELATIONSHIPS

The Cornerstone of **Effective Advocacy**



**A Hospital/Health System Toolkit to Help Build
Your Relationship With Elected Officials**



Building Relationships

As hospitals and health systems continue to navigate unprecedented challenges, the Illinois Health and Hospital Association (IHA) understands it has never been more important for elected officials to hear directly from their hospital leaders.

Building relationships with your elected officials is instrumental to advancing legislation that supports hospitals and health systems as they transform healthcare delivery across the state. Equally, it is important to inform legislators about policies and legislation that, if enacted, would be detrimental.

An in-person, onsite visit provides the best environment for this conversation. Elected officials hearing directly from you and your team, in your hospital, allows you to showcase the healthcare programs and services you offer. It also provides a forum to educate legislators on the complex challenges and issues you and your team face.

When policies affecting hospitals arise in Washington, D.C. or in Springfield, we want legislators to say, “Here is what hospital leaders in my district think about that issue, and here’s how they are affected.”

Lawmakers need to know the details of your workforce challenges, and how recruitment and retention issues are impacting your organization. Policymakers need to understand that contentious payer practices aren’t simply frustrating but are significant workplace dissatisfiers when providers must sit on the phone for hours with insurance companies instead of caring for patients.

When IHA and the hospital community work together, the magnitude of what we can accomplish is significant. A key component of this collective effort includes you, our hospital leaders, establishing relationships with elected officials. These relationships are critical as we seek to secure the resources and implement policies allowing you to fulfill your mission of providing quality, equitable healthcare for your patients.



New Advocacy Tool

IHA created a new booklet—*What's at Stake*—highlighting the key issues facing Illinois hospitals today. We encourage you to leave a copy with legislators after your meetings.



Your Input Matters

Legislators need to know that hospitals and health systems are central to all healthcare policy discussions. Illinois' hospitals and health systems are:

1

CORNERSTONES OF THEIR COMMUNITY, providing quality, accessible and equitable healthcare services.

2

STRONG ECONOMIC ENGINES AND CONSISTENT SOURCE OF EMPLOYMENT, generating hundreds, even thousands, of jobs in the legislator's district.

Illinois hospitals deliver on the promise of better health and lifesaving care for millions of patients each year. Yet their reach extends outside their four walls: Illinois' hospitals and health systems have a significant financial and economic impact on our state.

\$135.5b

Hospitals pump \$135.5 billion into state and local economies annually

202k

They are one of Illinois' top job creators, employing 202,000 Illinoisans

521k

They generate 521,000 direct and indirect jobs

\$8.6b+

They deliver \$8.6b+ in community benefits across the state

Illinois hospitals are also working to enhance community and individual well-being, delivering nearly **\$8.6+ billion** in community benefits across the state through education, research, community involvement, and more. These innovative programs and partnerships are initiated and supported by hospitals to meet the unique needs of their communities.





IHA is Here to Support You Every Step of the Way

IHA seeks to ensure hospitals are equipped with the resources and tools needed to fulfill their mission and care for their community.

Forging a positive relationship with elected officials is a critically important step. This toolkit was created with that in mind.

We have developed resources to help you coordinate effective legislative visits.



As you prepare for your legislative visit, focus on the hospital community's advocacy priorities, including:

1

FINANCIAL IMPACT

- No Medicaid Cuts
- 340B Reforms
- Implement Medicaid MCO Reforms
- Medical Liability Environment

2

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT AND SAFETY

- Continue State Licensure Improvement
- Support Protections for Healthcare Workers
- Support Implementation of the State Healthcare Workforce Task Force

3

ADDITIONAL CRITICAL ISSUES

- Maintain Not-For-Profit Property Tax Exemptions
- Oppose Nurse/Hospital Staffing Ratios
- Support Appropriate Small Format Hospital Regulations
- Engage in Rural Health Transformation Funding



Showcase Your Hospital

Highlighting the critical and irreplaceable services your hospital offers as a center of healing and hope is key to a successful legislative visit.



BE BOLD

Initiate discussions about your hospital's integral role in the community. Stress your strong commitment to providing quality patient care. Detail your contributions to overall community health and wellness.

Emphasize Your Value

Discuss essential programs and services. For example: Is your mobile medical unit providing an important service in the surrounding community? Have you partnered with a local organization, community group or public health department to provide community programming? If possible, bring your community partners into the meeting to speak to your partnership.

Demonstrate to your legislator the human impact you have. Point to the valuable services you offer to improve health in the region. Talk about patient satisfaction, quality initiatives and programs designed to fulfill community needs.

Discuss the work of your nursing care committee. Discuss how your nursing care committee is advancing meaningful change through the partnership and collaboration with direct care nurses across your organization.

Highlight ways you are addressing health equity, and how these efforts benefit your patients, your organization, and the community.

Whatever you choose to emphasize, the goal is for your elected official(s) to leave with an understanding of the work your hospital does both inside and outside its four walls. Lawmakers should also leave with an understanding of the delicate balance of what is at stake during this crucial time.

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Discuss Your Challenges and Concerns

A strong message to legislators will emphasize how critical it is to support adequate funding and invest in sound healthcare policy solutions that broaden healthcare access and improve the quality of care for all Illinoisans.

Illinois cannot be a strong state—and have a competitive economy—without a vital healthcare delivery system led by the Illinois hospital community. Each facility is an economic anchor and job creator. State investment in the healthcare system is an investment in Illinois residents' health and well-being.

Legislation impacting hospitals and health systems' financial security will have implications beyond the hospital, including access to care, community services, jobs and the local economy.

Connect the dots between how services and programs are affected by insufficient funding and egregiously unfair and contentious payor practices. Medicaid cuts enacted through H.R. 1 are significant and they are coming our way. Similarly, provide examples of the burdensome MCO prior authorization requirements along with how limiting lifesaving medications acquired through the 340B program hinder access to care and exacerbate health disparities. Be specific with your legislator how your hospital plows 340B resources right back into healthcare access expansion for the underserved. Lastly, tell how rising medical liability insurance coverage impacts your hospital's ability to maintain or expand programs and services.





Meeting With Your Legislator

Legislators have demanding schedules, driven by the spring state legislative session in Springfield. **Mondays and Fridays from mid-January through February are often a good time to schedule a meeting.** During the months of March through May, in-district meetings become more difficult due to lawmakers' increased time in Springfield.

The following draft schedule reflects a 90 minute meeting featuring hospital leadership, board members and key staff.

— DRAFT AGENDA —

Welcome and Introductions (10 minutes)

The hospital CEO should kick off the meeting with a welcome and introductions. Of course, the legislator will appreciate the CEO expressing appreciation for their service to the state of Illinois—and for taking the time to meet.

Hospital Overview (30 minutes)

Led by CEO, CFO, COO, CNO or other appropriate staff.

- ▶ **Use this information in conjunction with IHA's advocacy resources to send a unified message about the hospital community's top priorities.** Emphasize how a patient-focused, objective standardization of prior authorization and medical necessity review processes, as well as greater state oversight of the prior authorization program, will support care coordination and improve health outcomes. If you are a 340B hospital, stress the need for legislation that will help assure access to lifesaving drugs for patients served by 340B-covered entities.
- ▶ **Highlight services and programs that may be negatively impacted or eliminated due to contentious insurance payment practices, lack of necessary staff/workforce or rising medical liability costs.** Inform legislators about any services and community outreach projects that are underway.
- ▶ Consider utilizing video testimonials, photography or hospital-specific informational materials to further engage the legislator(s) and highlight the important ways you are working in the community. **Draw attention to important projects.**

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Discussion of Pertinent Issues (30-40 minutes)

Encourage presenters to lead a 3-5 minute discussion on their portion of the agenda, leaving time for follow-up questions or comments.

Suggested attendees and issues to discuss:

- ▶ **CFO:** Discuss Medicaid MCO and commercial payer practices. Provide examples of how inflation, rising costs (including medical liability), supply chain obstacles and other financial issues are negatively impacting programs and services.
- ▶ **CMO/or Risk Management:** Inform the legislator about the steps taken to support and educate your staff/team due to unprecedented workplace violence. Share scenarios, education programs or changes your hospital has implemented or invested in.
- ▶ **CNO:** Report on the work, engagement and investment in the Nurse Staffing Improvement Act. Share changes made, or obstacles addressed through your hospital nursing committee. Engage legislators to understand why nurse staffing ratio legislation is not a solution to address staffing concerns or shortages.
- ▶ **Hospital Board Chair:** Highlight community support, partnerships and local issues.

Adjournment and Concluding Remarks (10 minutes)

The CEO should conclude by emphasizing the hospital's high-quality care, community outreach efforts, regional impact and any challenges or threats facing the hospital—and again thank the legislator for their support and for taking time to meet.

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FOR MORE INFORMATION

Contact Dave Gross at dgross@team-iha.org or 217-541-1161, or Nichole Magalis at nmagalis@team-iha.org or 217-541-1162, for questions or further assistance.



Planning Your Legislative Visit



- 1. Schedule** a visit when the CEO, executive leadership and board chair can be present for the entire conversation.
- 2. Invite** the legislator with a phone call or email to the district office.
- 3. Notify** hospital colleagues well in advance of the meeting that you would like them to participate in the visit. For example, your nursing care committee co-chair. Providing ample advance notice will give them time to prepare remarks or resources for the meeting.
- 4. Identify** ways to showcase your hospital and give your legislator a personalized experience. This could include video, photography or hospital-specific promotional materials.
- 5. Prepare** a hospital fact sheet(s). Make sure to include your customized economic impact report, which can be found in the IHA C-Suite.
- 6. Familiarize** yourself with your legislator—review their biography, committee assignments, and legislative history. Contact Dave Gross, dgross@team-iha.org or 217-541-1161, or Nichole Magalis, nmagalis@team-iha.org or 217-541-1162, for questions or further assistance.
- 7. Hold** a pre-meeting or trial run prior to the meeting, to ensure your team is coordinated.
- 8.** During the visit, **emphasize** to legislator(s) that:
 - a.** Your hospital is a trusted, reliable source for information on healthcare issues;
 - b.** Many employees, physicians, patients and volunteers work in and support your hospital;
 - c.** Your employees are skilled and dedicated to caring for their patients; and
 - d.** Your hospital makes significant contributions to the community above and beyond medical care.
- 9. Publicize** the meeting. Ask your PR team to cover the event. Work with the legislator's team to provide them with any photographs taken during your visit. Maximize website and social media postings, tagging the legislator when possible. Include an article highlighting the visit in the hospital newsletter and board reports.
- 10. Send** a personal note from the CEO thanking the legislator(s) for taking the time to participate. Enclose a copy of a hospital newsletter article or any media coverage.



Sample Invitation

Dear Honorable [Legislator]:

As a member of the Illinois House of Representatives/Illinois Senate, I know you consider many legislative proposals that impact hospitals and healthcare. From the state budget, to other measures impacting regulatory processes and workforce concerns, the General Assembly will have important decisions to make during the spring legislative session.

As the [CEO/PRESIDENT] of [HOSPITAL] in [CITY OR COMMUNITY] and on behalf of our leadership team and the board of directors, I invite you to join us for a hospital visit. We welcome the opportunity to discuss our mission to serve the residents of your district, and our thoughts on important issues related to healthcare. We would also like to highlight some recent changes at our hospital that will improve the health and well-being of your constituents.

I will call your office in the coming days to discuss when your schedule would allow for an opportunity to learn more about our service to the community.

You are also welcome to contact me directly. My personal cell phone number is [XXX-XXX-XXXX].

We look forward to visiting with you.

Sincerely,

HOSPITAL PRESIDENT/CEO

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Sample Thank You Note

Dear Honorable [LEGISLATOR]:

Thank you for making time to meet with the team at [HOSPITAL]. It was a pleasure to [MEET YOU/SEE YOU AGAIN]. We greatly appreciate the time you took to discuss the issues and challenges important to our hospital and the healthcare community.

We also welcomed the opportunity to highlight some of the services and programs we offer your constituents, and to talk more about how we are improving the health and well-being of those living in your district.

Should you have any questions on legislation or health policy, please feel free to contact me directly. My personal cell phone number is [XXX-XXX-XXXX]. I would welcome the opportunity to connect in the future, as you consider various healthcare proposals during the legislative session.

On behalf of our entire team at [HOSPITAL], thank you for your service to our state. We greatly appreciate your support.

Sincerely,

HOSPITAL PRESIDENT/CEO



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Sample Press Release Template

State Senator/Representative [NAME] visits [HOSPITAL NAME]

(CITY LOCATION) - State Senator/Representative [NAME] visited with [HOSPITAL] administrators and staff on [DATE] to discuss pressing state policy and fiscal issues and highlight the hospital's healthcare priorities. [NAME OF LEGISLATOR] represents the [NUMBER] Senate/House District in the Illinois General Assembly, which includes [CITY OR COMMUNITY].

"I'm pleased that [REP./SEN. NAME] took the time to meet with our team and learn more about how we are working to improve the health and well-being of those living in the community," said [NAME], President and CEO of [HOSPITAL]. "We had a good discussion about [HIGHLIGHT PROGRAMS, SERVICES YOUR HOSPITAL IS PROVIDING THE COMMUNITY], and discussed pending legislation and policies of concern to the hospital and healthcare community."

During his/her visit, [REP./SEN. NAME] learned more about the many ways [HOSPITAL] serves [LEGISLATIVE DISTRICT #] residents, and discussed some of their current and anticipated challenges.

Optional: Quote from Senator/Representative

The visit allowed hospital leaders and board members to highlight community benefit programs provided by the hospital, ongoing quality initiatives and improvements, workforce shortages, the need for payor practice reforms, and other critical healthcare concerns.

[REP./SEN. NAME] and other lawmakers will make important decisions during the 2026 spring legislative session regarding the state budget, healthcare worker safety and overall healthcare policy that will impact [HOSPITAL] and [CITY OR COMMUNITY].

The visit was coordinated by the Illinois Health and Hospital Association (IHA) as part of an effort to bring together hospital leaders and their legislators and help cultivate good working relationships.



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Legislative Visit Information

Hospital name and city: _____

Date of visit: _____

Names(s) of Senator(s) or Representative(s): _____

Name, title and preferred contact information of person who led the visit: _____

Activities:

- Met board chair/key management staff. Including:
- Met hospital employees. Including:
- Discussed need for payor practice reforms.
- Discussed workforce shortages, recruitment and retention challenges.
- Discussed need for legislation targeting violence against hospital workers.
- Discussed Nurse Staffing by Acuity Act implementation, nurse staffing committee progress.
- Discussed the medical liability environment and its impact to your institution.
- Discussed quality improvement programs and patient safety.
- Sent a follow-up thank you communication.
- Other: _____

Comments from legislator(s) on priority issues: _____

Value of the legislative visit: _____

Suggestions for future visits: _____

**PLEASE COMPLETE THIS PAGE AND EMAIL IT TO
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