

# Organizing and educating for the Legislative Session (Doing your part to get a bill passed)

*Special thanks to Youth Alternatives/Advocacy & Prevention Services  
for sharing this document with FFTA members*

## **Educating Legislators:**

1. Remember, your legislators work for you. They may not always agree with you, but they are elected to listen and consider your point of view.
2. You have potential two sets of legislators—those who represent the district in which you LIVE, and those who represent the district in which you WORK! Use them both.
3. A third set is those who are in the county you work or live in, but not necessarily in the district. Very often, the county delegation work as a team, so reach out to others in the county.
4. Check to see who in your delegation sits on the committees the bills you are working for are assigned to. These are key people early in the session, while the bill is still in committee.
5. Make committee members your first priority. Make sure the whole delegation knows how important a key issue or bill is to you, but focus on committee members.
6. Choose a few key bills, or issues. Don't bombard them with so many they don't feel the pressure or focus.
7. Know the bills well, and be ready to speak to the issue.
8. Call them and leave a short, concise message saying who you are, and why you want to talk about the bill.
9. Write them a short, simple letter about with the same message.
10. Keep trying to talk to them, but also write them a simple letter with bulleted information about the bill.
11. Try to go to the hearing. If you can't, send testimony, or better yet, send someone else.
12. As the session progresses, keep up with the bill, and touch base with both committee members you know, and your delegation. Better yet, be sure there is a group working together on the same bill, and strategizing. Passing bills is often about pressure and anecdotes.

## **Preparation for a legislative hearing**

1. Call supporters, particularly your legislators on the committees the bills will be heard in, and be sure they know about our bills, and tell them if you will be at the hearing.
2. Decide who from your group and/or community should speak--you, a board member, a family or whomever. Don't forget though, they DO NOT APPRECIATE TOO MUCH, TOO LONG, TOO REPETITIVE TESTIMONY. When you get have a strategic mix of people who actually

testify, and the others are introduced, so that they will know who is there. JUST BECAUSE PEOPLE WON'T SPEAK IS NOT A REASON NOT TO COME!

3. Be prepared to stay—there may be a very long list of bills—you never know what the order is, so you may have a wait.
4. Be on time, you may find out you are at the end of the list, but they really do start on time.
5. Check in with your group to see if the testimony will be organized in any order.
6. If you plan to testify, have your testimony written and bring 16 copies.

Prepared by: Lucky Hollander  
Youth Alternatives/Advocacy & Prevention Services  
P.O. Box 596, Portland, ME 04112  
(207) 874-1175 FAX 874-1181  
[advocacy@youthalternatives.org](mailto:advocacy@youthalternatives.org)