



# WELCOME

To the 2025 Disability Policy Webinar Series

*Thank You For Joining Us*

**June 20, 2025**



M<sup>c</sup>CALL  
HAMILTON  
*Advocacy & Public Affairs*

**Emily Henderson**  
Government Affairs Consultant



# What's Happening in Lansing & How to be an Effective Advocate

Emily Henderson

June 20, 2025

# Current Michigan Government Landscape

Executive & Legislative Branches



# Executive Branch

- Governor (Executive Office) – Governor Gretchen Whitmer (D)
- Key State Departments/Agencies
  - MI Department of Health & Human Services (DHHS)
    - Behavioral and Physical Health and Aging Services Administration (BPHASA)
      - Medical Services Administration (Medicaid)
      - Bureau of Children's Coordinated Health Policy and Supports
  - Michigan Department of Education



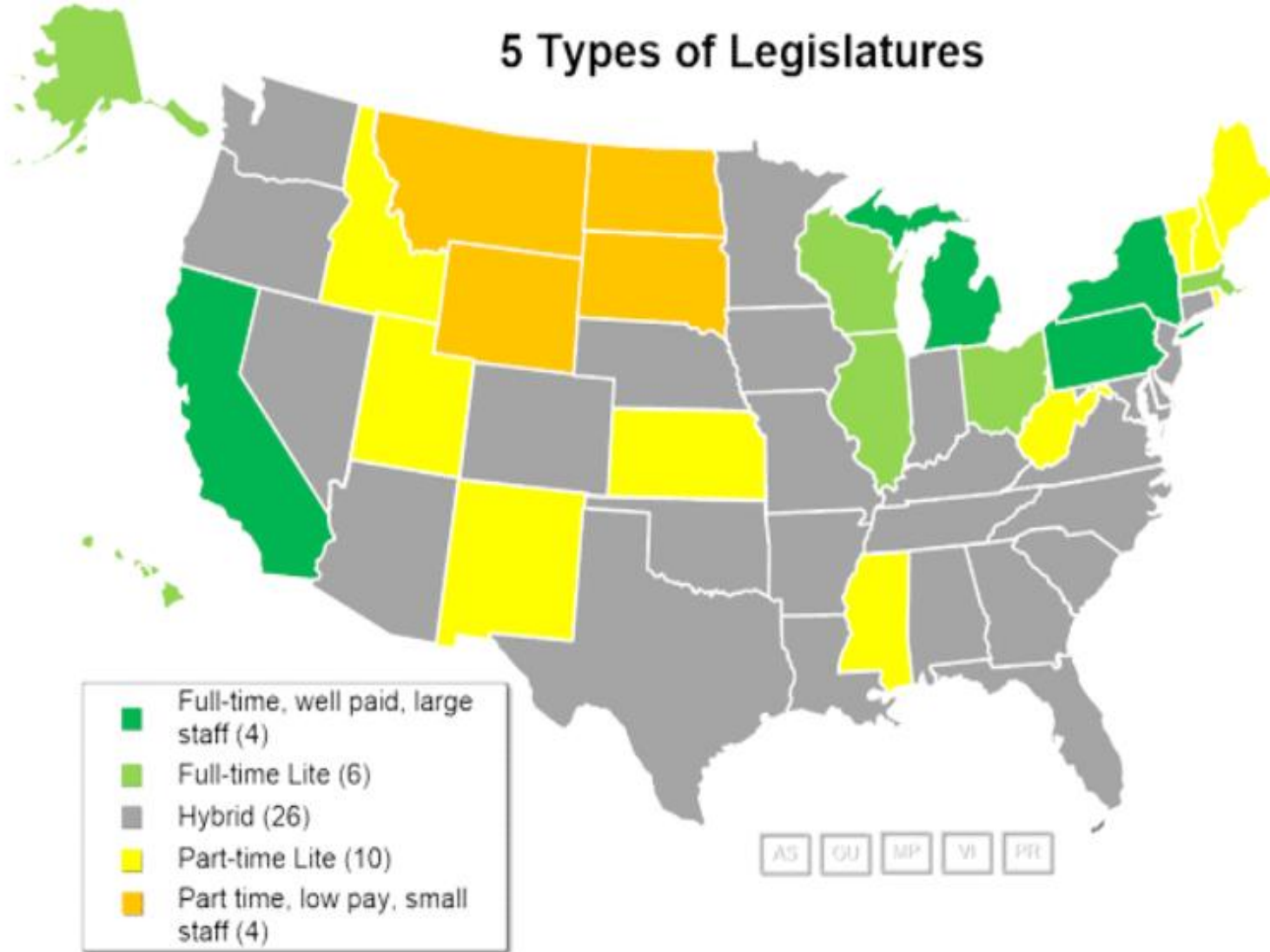
# State Agency Leaders

- Elizabeth Hertel – Director, Michigan Department of Health and Human Services
  - David Knezek – Chief Deputy for Administration
  - Dr. Natasha Bagdasarian – Chief Medical Executive
  - Meghan Groen – Senior Deputy Director, Behavioral and Physical Health and Aging Services Administration
  - Erin Emerson – Senior Deputy Director, Health Services Administration
  - Demetrius Starling – Senior Deputy Director, Children’s Services Administration
  - Kristen Morningstar – Director, Specialty Behavioral Health Services
  - Patricia Neitman - Director, Bureau of Children’s Coordinated Health Policy and Supports
  - Belinda Hawks - Director, Division of Adult Home and Community Based Services
  - Chardaé Burton – Director of Legislative Affairs at MDHHS





## 5 Types of Legislatures



# Legislative Branch

- House Democrats lost their majority in November 2024
- Senate was not up for election (House: every 2 years, Senate: every 4 years)
- Split state government
  - 19-18 Democratic majority in Senate
  - 58-52 Republican majority in House





# Arc Advocacy Issues



# Key Legislative Issues

- PPOs for Vulnerable Adults (SB 111 – 114)
- Guardianship/Conservatorship – changes to EPIC (HB 4632 – 4635)
- Recipient Rights Advisory Committee Membership (SB 142, HB 4218)
- Voting Rights/Access (HJR B)
- Informed Consent for Mental Health Treatment (SB 143, 4219)



# Budget Priorities

- Protecting Medicaid
- Direct Care Worker Wage
- Foster Care Disability Navigation Program
- Special Education Funding
- School Aid Categorical Funding



# Regulatory Issues

- Medicaid Waivers
- Proposed Policies
  - [2516-BCCHPS](#): Children's Waiver Program. Policy would add 100 waiver slots, update eligibility for overnight health and safety supports, update respite care, and update CLS guidance.
  - Comments due July 3, 2025



# Regulatory Issues

- PIHP Procurement
  - [February](#): MDHHS issued a survey to seek input from those enrolled in Medicaid or working with the Medicaid population to identify opportunities for improvement within the PIHP system.
  - [May](#): MDHHS releases the results of the survey, indicating an RFP process will begin this summer to allow organizations to apply.
  - Goal: improve Michigan's behavioral health system



# What is Advocacy & Why Do We Engage?



# What is Advocacy?

- Supporting a cause/issue in an effort to **educate** lawmakers and build support around an issue
- Advocacy involves
  - Nonpartisan research and analysis
  - Sharing personal stories or best practices with elected officials
  - Invitation to testify
- Advocacy does not always involve lobbying
  - Lobbying involves direct contact with an elected official to influence (proposing, supporting, or opposing legislation).
  - Lobbying also involves money – a nonprofit organization’s fund can not go towards lobbying activities



If you are unsure if an activity falls under education or lobbying, please consult legal counsel regarding the laws that apply to your organization



# ADVOCACY VS. LOBBYING

Know the Difference

## ADVOCACY



Broader effort to influence public opinion and policy



Legal for all nonprofits



Includes education, awareness, research sharing



Often targets the public, media, or government in general

## LOBBYING



Direct attempt to influence legislation



Restricted or regulated for some nonprofits (e.g., 501(c)(3)s)



Includes talking to lawmakers, supporting/opposing specific bills

Tip: All lobbying is advocacy, but not all advocacy is lobbying.

# Advocacy on Multiple Fronts

- State advocacy is not limited to Michigan's elected officials. Michigan Legislature:
  - House of Representatives – 110 Members
  - Senate – 38 Members
- Regulatory Engagement
  - Department of Health and Human Services
  - Department of Licensing and Regulatory Affairs



# Why Engage with Your Legislator?

- Most legislators are not public health experts, well-versed in the health policy space, or someone with lived experience
  - You likely know more than they do
- You are already an advocate every day
- You have a unique and critical perspective
- Ability to develop a relationship



# Being Active in Advocacy with Your State Lawmakers



Step 1:

Know the landscape & have properly  
timed conversations

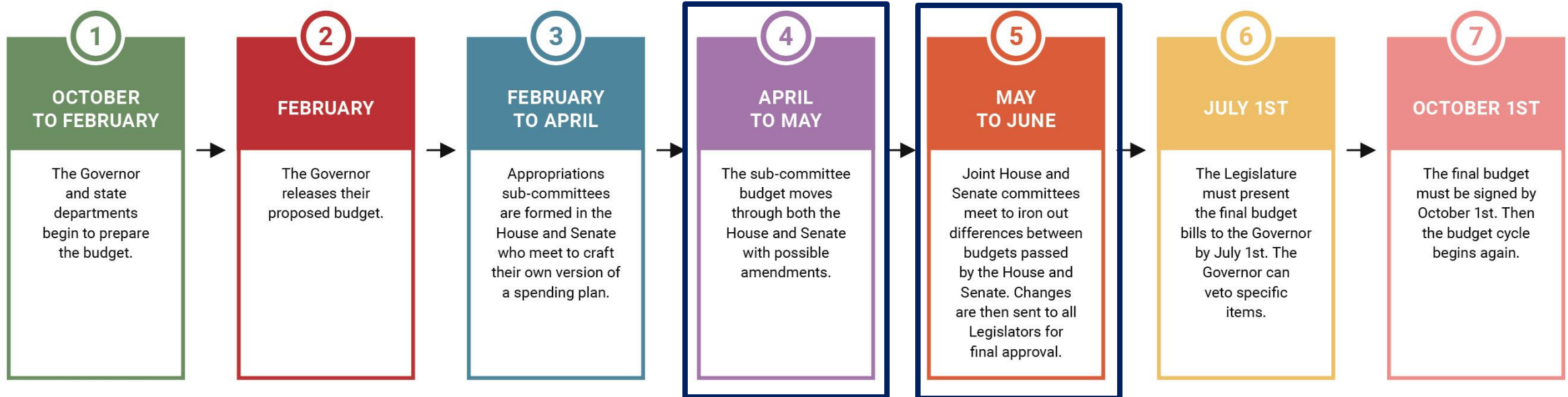


# Legislative Branch

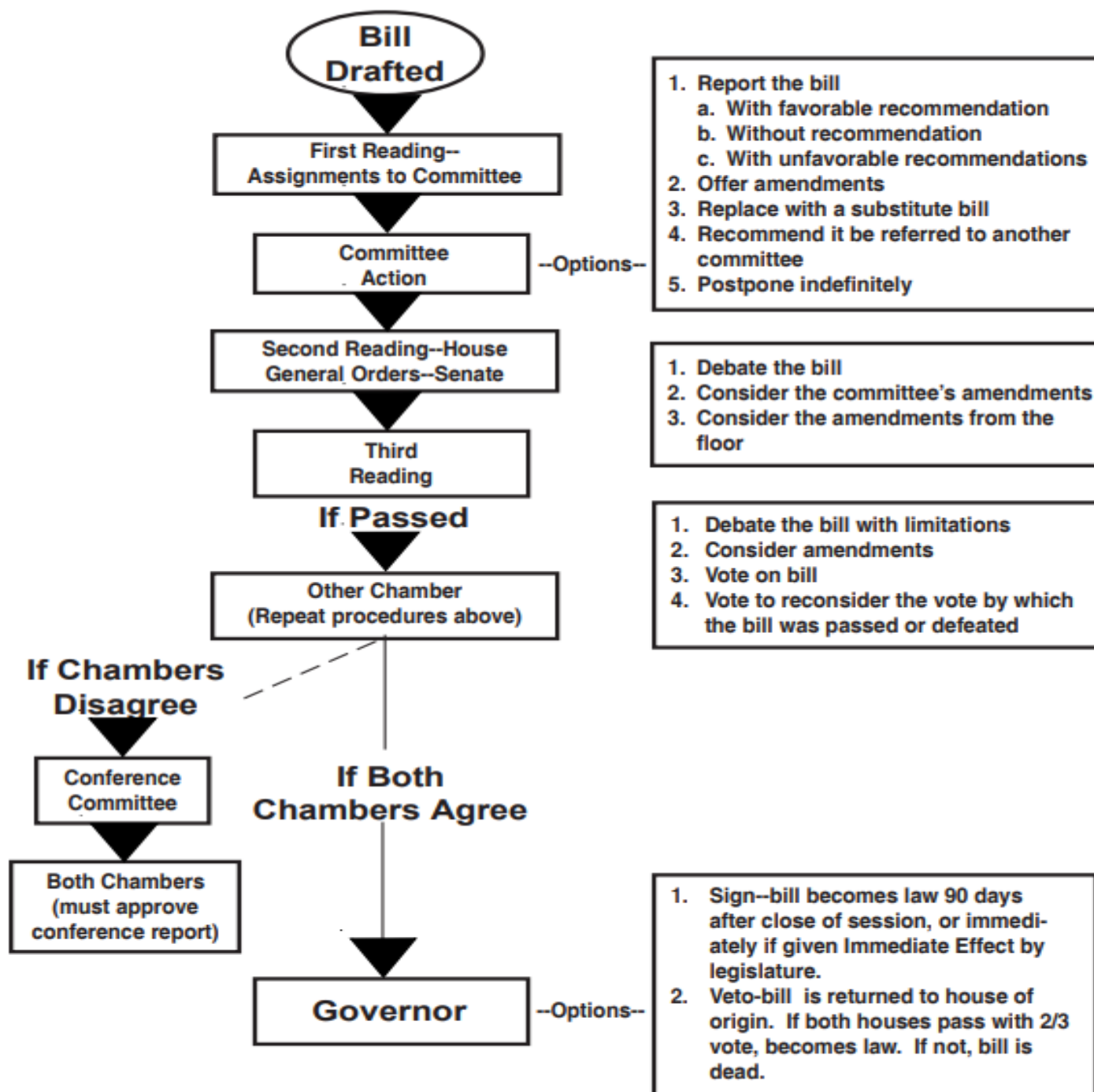
- Split state government
- 19-18 Democratic majority in Senate (Michigan currently has 1 vacant seat)
  - Senate Majority Leader Winne Brinks
  - Senate Minority Leader Aric Nesbitt
- 58-52 Republican majority in House
  - House Speaker Matt Hall
  - House Minority Leader Ranjeev Puri
- New Term Limits
  - New term limits for state representatives and state senators: 12-year total limit in any combination between house and senate, except a person elected to senate in 2022 may be elected the number of times allowed when that person became a candidate.



# STATE OF MICHIGAN BUDGET CYCLE







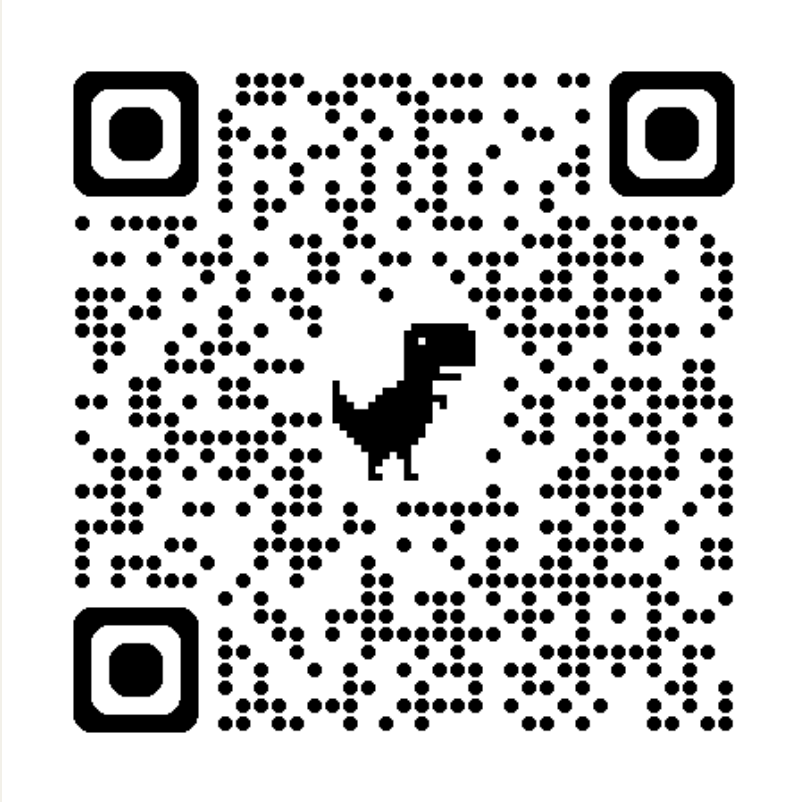
# Step 2:

# Connect with your lawmakers



# Identifying Your Legislator

To find you Michigan State Representative and  
Senator:



# Making Contact

- You can meet your legislator in-district or in Lansing
- Events
  - Coffee Hours (could be virtual!)
  - Office Visits
  - Advocacy Days
  - Letters/Emails
  - Site Visits/Facility Tours
  - Sign up for their newsletters
  - Follow your legislators on social media (Facebook, X)



# Making Contact

## Setting Up a Meeting

- Whether you are setting up a meeting via email or phone, the following information will be helpful for staff:
  1. Introduction – name, mention where you work or who you represent
  2. Reason for contacting – concise, but detailed enough to get the ball rolling
  3. Contact information – always provide a phone number, email address, or personal address (if comfortable doing so)
  4. Share your schedule – giving the staff an idea of your flexibility will make scheduling a meeting much easier.
    1. Some meetings take a while to get scheduled, be prepared to wait or be scheduled weeks out



# Meeting Preparation

Doing some ‘self-education’ on your legislator and their priorities will prepare you for your encounter. You should be researching the following:

- The legislator
  - Their website, social media
- The district
  - What cities are in the district? What has been reported locally?
- Current state of politics
  - Advocacy updates, local news ‘politics’ section
- The issue at hand
  - Are they talking about it in Lansing? Is it a local issue? Is it a personal issue?



# Preparation

- Meet at the right time
- Be confident in your personal experience/expertise
  - Know **your** story
- Bring any written materials or handouts for the legislator
- Don't be afraid to have talking points/written notes
- Bring something to take notes
- Practice!





# The Foundation

- Develop the relationship
  - Introductions, find commonalities/make a personal connection
- Have a clear message
- Timing
  - Schedule your meeting proactively – before and during the height of the issue
  - Conciseness



# Strategies and Tactics

- Have strategic and properly-timed conversations
- Be pro-active & reactive
- Don't be afraid to say you don't know
- Be prepared to compromise
- Be flexible



# Flexibility

- Most notable for meetings in Lansing
- Legislative agenda is always changing
- Significance of meeting with staff
- Be prepared to wait or to shorten your meeting



# Follow Up

- Hand-written note, if possible
- Send any documents or information promised
- Establish consistency and continuity



# Continuing the Relationship

- Continue reach outs to the office
- Stay up-to-date on your legislator's activities in Lansing
- Attend events
- Support your legislator
  - Volunteering
  - Events
  - Fundraising



## Step 3:

Prepare for committee hearings & make  
your voice heard



# Committee Testimony

- You must fill out a card if you want to speak or submit written comments before committee begins. The card must have:
  - Name, position, wanting to speak (if you select 'no' your position will be on the record and you can provide written comments), contact information
  - Recommended time: 5 minutes or less (depending on the agenda that day)
- MI Legislature: [How Committees Work](#)



Committee: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
Bill#(s): \_\_\_\_\_

**Wish To Speak:**

☐ Yes ☐ No

☐ Support Bill ☐ Oppose Bill ☐ Neutral

Time Needed: \_\_\_\_\_

Please leave a copy of any prepared statement with the committee clerk.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
Representing: \_\_\_\_\_  
Email: \_\_\_\_\_  
Phone: \_\_\_\_\_  
City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_

**CARD FOR LEGISLATIVE USE ONLY**



# Providing Testimony (Verbal & Written)

## Outline

### 1. Introduction

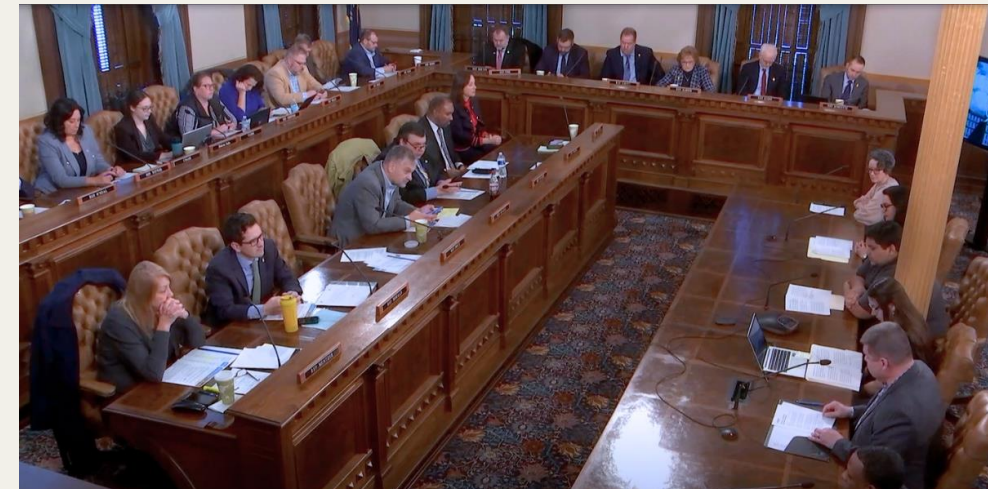
- Begin with thanks to Chair and members of the committee
- Name, location of where you reside/work
- State support or opposition to the specific bill number(s)

### 2. Overview of Issue

- Offer a perspective that will differ from other potential speakers (i.e. how would this specifically impact you, your organization, your family/friends)
- Offer real world stories

### 3. Conclude

- Wrap up thoughts – restate position
- Offer collaboration going forward
- Final thanks



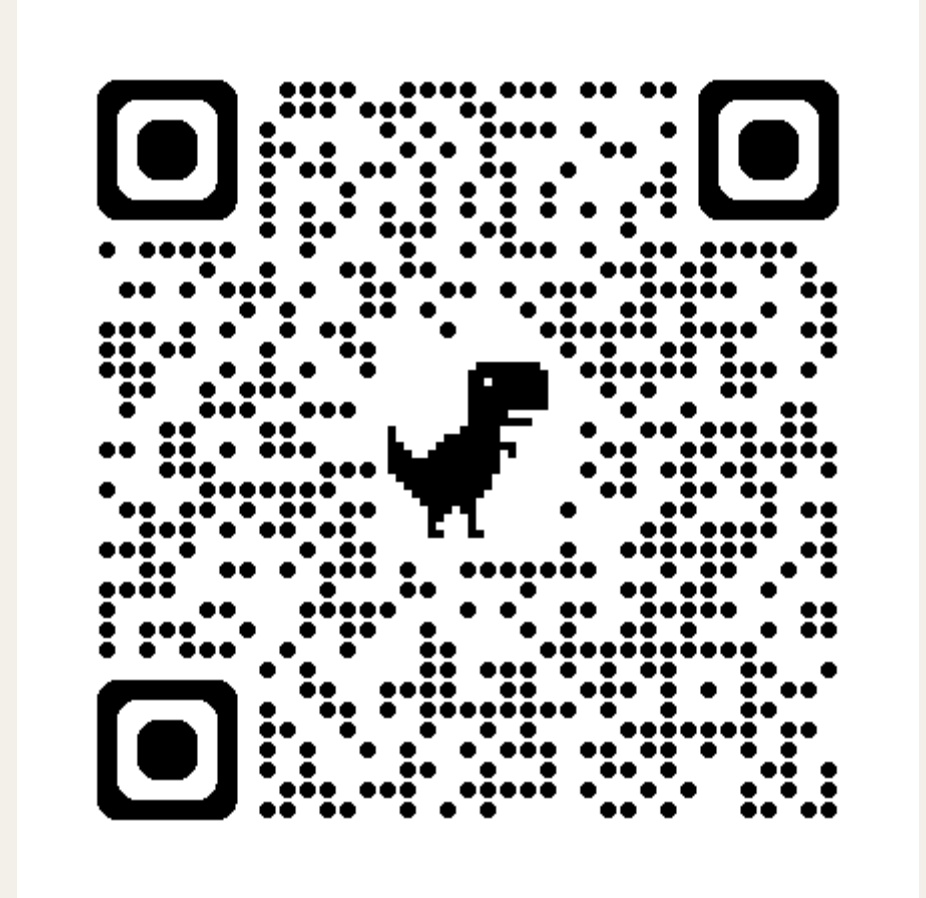
# Tips

- Dress for the occasion
- If verbally testifying or providing comments, always come with written copies of your testimony/letter
- Be prepared to answer questions - “I don’t know” and “I can follow up with you” are always suitable answers



# Get Involved Today

- Identify your state lawmakers – Representative and Senator
- Share your personal story and/or why you do this work



# Resources

- 102<sup>nd</sup> Legislature – Citizen's Guide to State Government:

<https://www.legislature.mi.gov/Publications/CitizensGuide.pdf>

- National Conference of State Legislatures:

<https://www.ncsl.org/>

- Michigan Constitution:

<http://legislature.mi.gov/Publications/MICConstitution.pdf>

- State Budget Office

<https://www.michigan.gov/budget/>

- House Fiscal Agency Publications:

<https://www.house.mi.gov/hfa/home.asp>

- Senate Fiscal Agency Publications:

<https://www.senate.michigan.gov/sfa/>



# Questions?





**Thank You**  
*For Joining Us!*

You can find handouts, links, & recordings at  
[www.arcmi.org/2025policywebinar](http://www.arcmi.org/2025policywebinar)