



Speak Up HCANJ:

Legislative Engagement Guide

Building Relationships. Taking Action.
Strengthening Care.





The HCANJ Advocacy Toolkit equips members with the tools to connect directly with policymakers and make their voices heard.

Inside, you'll find practical guides, sample materials, and step-by-step instructions to host facility tours and share personal stories.

Together, let's build stronger relationships and a stronger future for long term care in New Jersey.



HOSTING COMMUNITY VISITS WITH LAWMAKERS

WHY YOU SHOULD HOST A LEGISLATIVE TOUR OR MEETING AT YOUR FACILITY.

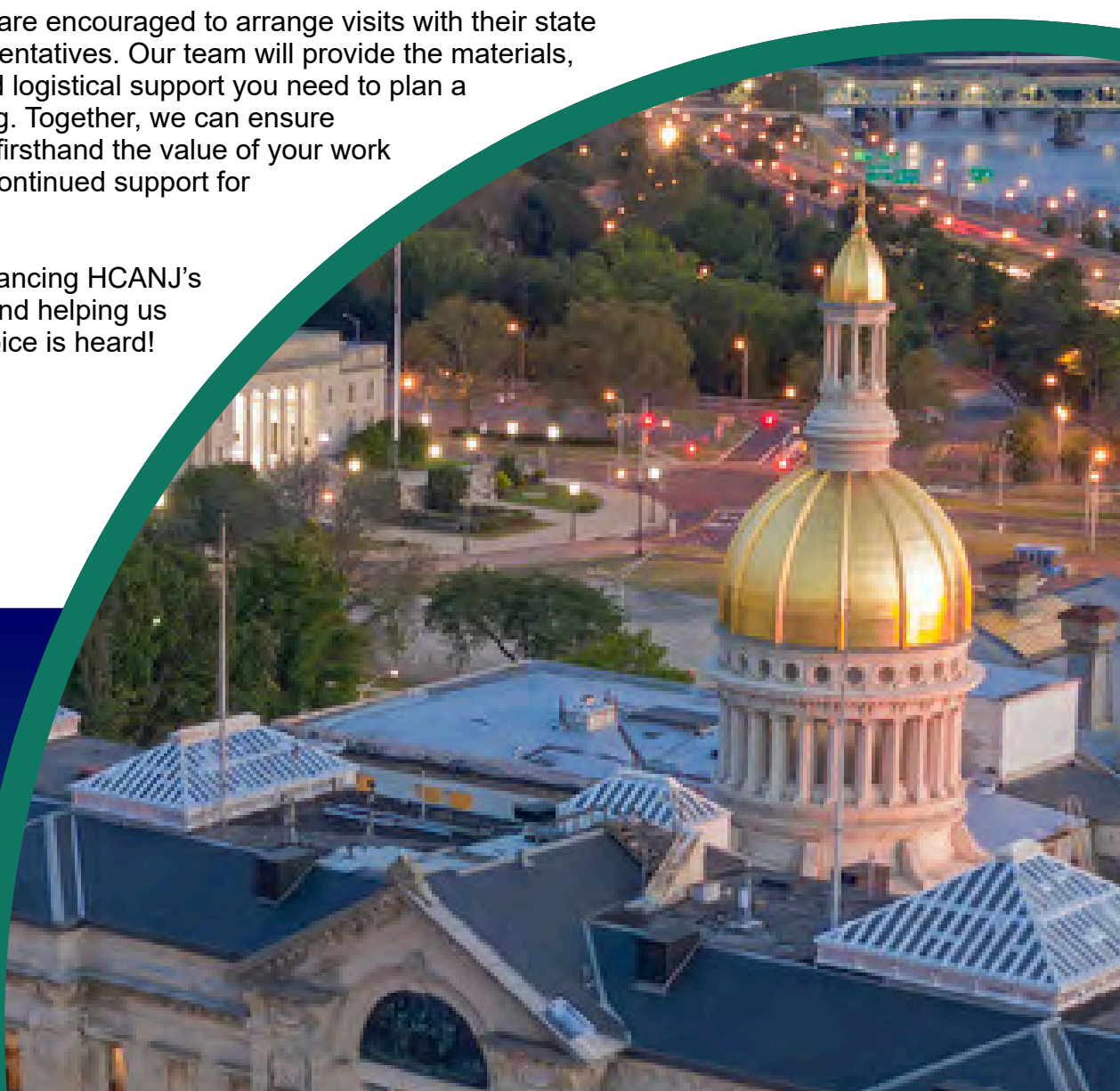
The Health Care Association of New Jersey (HCANJ) is the trusted voice for New Jersey's long term care and senior living providers. A vital part of our mission is to advocate for policies that strengthen care delivery, support our workforce, and protect access and affordability for the residents we serve.

HCANJ regularly engages with state and federal lawmakers to discuss the real-world impact of workforce shortages, rising costs, and regulatory challenges. **But no one tells that story better than you.** Legislators want to hear directly from the providers, caregivers, and residents who live these challenges every day.

Building relationships with elected officials is one of the most important steps in influencing legislation. Legislative visits give you the opportunity to showcase your community, share real stories, and highlight the impact of policy decisions on residents and staff. When legislators hear directly from you — the people living and working in long term care — it helps them make more informed decisions that support quality care across New Jersey.

HCANJ members are encouraged to arrange visits with their state and federal representatives. Our team will provide the materials, talking points, and logistical support you need to plan a successful meeting. Together, we can ensure policymakers see firsthand the value of your work and the need for continued support for long term care.

Thank you for advancing HCANJ's advocacy efforts and helping us make sure your voice is heard!



HOW TO INVITE A LEGISLATOR TO VISIT YOUR COMMUNITY

Inviting your state or federal legislators to visit your community is one of the most effective ways to help them understand the challenges and successes of New Jersey's long term care providers. These visits allow lawmakers to see firsthand the dedication of your staff and the quality of care your residents receive.

#1 Identify your legislators

Start by determining which elected officials represent your district — your state assembly members, state senators, member of Congress, and US Senators.

Tools for identifying them are on the following page.

#2 Send an invitation

Reach out to the legislator's office by email to request a visit and tour. Two sample invitation letters are provided in this toolkit.

Clearly state your interest in hosting them and suggest a few possible dates.

Mention that you'd like to discuss how policies impact long term care providers, residents, and staff.

#3 Follow up

If you don't receive a response within a week, follow up with a phone call to the legislator's office.

It's perfectly appropriate to check in with their scheduler — legislators value these meetings with constituents and often appreciate the outreach.

#4 Schedule your visit

Send an email from your personal or professional account introducing yourself, your community, and the purpose of your visit.

Suggest a few possible dates. The best times to schedule are **during legislative recesses or election periods**, when legislators are in their home districts.

#5 Confirm details

Once confirmed, share an overview and agenda of your visit. Confirm again with staff a few days before your meeting. Schedules often shift, so flexibility is key.

If a visit is delayed or rescheduled, don't be discouraged. Persistence builds relationships.

#6 Get support

HCANJ is available to support you throughout this process. We can provide templates, talking points, and guidance to help ensure a successful and informative visit.

Please contact Katherine Gursky katherine@hcanj.org with any questions you may have.

FIND YOUR LEGISLATORS' CONTACT INFORMATION

Find your State Senator and/or Assemblyperson

Scan the QR code below or click on the link to visit the New Jersey State Legislature's website and use their Find Your Legislator tool. Choose "DISTRICT MAP".



Enter your facility's zip code to find which legislative District you're in. Click on the district boundary to see your legislators.

<https://www.njleg.state.nj.us/#findLegislator>



Scan to Find your State Senator and/or Assemblyperson

Find your Congressional Representative

Scan the QR code below or visit the link below. Enter your facility's zip code and click on "LOOK UP".

<https://www.house.gov/representatives>



Scan to find your Congressional Representative

You may also use the HCANJ District Directory for contact details.



SAMPLE INVITATIONS TO LEGISLATORS

Example #1

Dear **[Senator/Assemblymember Last Name]**,

We would be honored to welcome you to **[Facility Name]** for the **[Occasion/Event]** or at another convenient time.

Our residents and staff—many of whom are your constituents—would love the opportunity to thank you for your support and share the work we do to provide high-quality, person-centered care. We hope you'll join us to see firsthand how communities help seniors thrive with dignity, purpose, and connection.

We look forward to the opportunity to host you!

Warm regards,

Example #2

Dear **[Senator/Assemblymember Last Name]**,

We would be honored to welcome you to **[Facility Name]** for a visit at your convenience.

As a provider serving seniors in your district, we believe it's important for you to see firsthand how public policy impacts our residents, families, and staff. A visit offers the opportunity to meet those who live and work here, hear their stories, and discuss the challenges and opportunities facing assisted living communities today.

You'll have the chance to connect with care team members, hear from families about their experiences, and tour our community to see how we're supporting older adults with dignity, independence, and compassion.

We hope to welcome you soon!

Warm regards,

BEFORE THE TOUR



Set Aside Time

- Schedule at least one hour for the tour and visit.
- Be flexible with timing, as legislators may arrive early or late based on their schedule.



Plan Food & Beverages

- Offer light refreshments for guests, staff, and residents.
- Avoid over-ordering, as leftover food often goes to waste.



Inform Your Team

- Notify all employees in advance.
- Provide background on the legislator or candidate visiting.
- Alert staff supervisors to explain their work areas during the tour.
- Schedule a pre-event walk through so participants can practice the flow and what they are going to say.
- Ensure the team is prepared and comfortable to engage.



Designate a Photographer

- Legislators often appreciate photos with constituents.
- Assign someone to take photos during the visit.
- Ensure photo releases are signed for all residents featured in any images.



Optional Resident Interaction

- Consider identifying 1–2 residents or family members in advance who would like to briefly meet the legislator or ask a question. This adds a personal touch and shows the human side of your services.
- Personal stories stay with the members longer than facts and make the biggest impression.
- Use their story to relate back to the particular bill or concern that is going to be discussed.
- Practice with the resident and family and even encourage them to write down their thoughts so it is not lost in the moment.

Important: If no one expresses interest, that's perfectly okay. It's better to allow natural interactions than to force them.

DURING THE TOUR



Let the Administrator Lead

- The Administrator should conduct the tour.
- Assign supervisors or department leads to speak briefly about their areas.



Include Remarks & Engagement

- Plan a short gathering where the legislator can address residents, staff, and family members.
- Consider hosting this in a community space like the main hall or reception room.



Host a Private Discussion

You will typically have 15 to 30 minutes in a private setting. It's essential to be clear, concise, and prepared. **Here's a structure to help guide your conversation:**

1. Break the Ice

- Introduce yourself and your role.
- Share whether residents or their families live in the legislator's district.
- Mention any voter engagement or community involvement among residents to create a local connection.

2. Describe Your Community

If a formal tour has not occurred, provide a brief overview:

- Number of residents and staff
- Services provided
- Community or charitable partnerships
- Local vendors and businesses you support
- Any ties to faith groups, volunteer organizations, schools, or local events

3. Explain the Purpose of the Visit

- Share why this meeting matters—whether to discuss:
 - A specific bill or regulation
 - Medicaid funding
 - Workforce challenges
 - Resident quality of life
- HCANJ can provide relevant background and issue briefs in advance.
- Ask for their support or consideration, and let them know you'll follow up with written materials or additional information



DURING THE TOUR



Host a Private Discussion Continued



4. Be Positive and Constructive

- Be candid about challenges (e.g., staffing shortages, reimbursement rates), but frame them with a tone of collaboration and a belief in progress.
- Emphasize the value of a strong working relationship between providers and policymakers.

5. Avoid Partisan Framing

- Keep the conversation nonpartisan—do not frame issues as Democrat vs. Republican.
- Focus on shared goals: improving care, protecting seniors, supporting workers, and ensuring responsible use of public funds.

6. Mind the Time and End Graciously

- Take note of body language or time constraints.
- Thank them for their time and attention.
- End by expressing your intent to follow up and your hope they'll stay in touch.



Facility Profile Packet

- Provide the legislator with a short, informative Facility Profile.
- Prepare a folder with promotional materials, relevant legislative issue briefs, and business cards.

Follow-Up After the Tour

- **Send a thank-you letter or email the day after the visit** while the tour details are still fresh. Be sure to send it to the district office of the state legislator.
- **Also, send a note to any legislative staffers who helped arrange the visit**, as they play an important role and appreciate the recognition. Be sure to get their contact information during the tour.
- **Add a personal touch** by referencing something discussed during the visit or a commitment the legislator made, which shows your appreciation and reinforces your message.
- **Include a few photos from the tour**, especially those showing interaction with residents and staff.
- If the local press did not attend, consider sending the editor a brief summary of the visit and a high-quality photo of the legislator.

THE POWER OF PERSONAL STORIES

When it comes to influencing policymakers, personal stories are one of the most powerful tools you have. Legislators meet with many constituents each week, but they remember the stories that bring policy issues to life.

During your community visit, consider sharing stories that show how legislation directly affects residents, staff, and operations. A resident's experience or an administrator's perspective can illustrate the real-world impact of a proposed bill—how it helps, where it falls short, and what it means for the people legislators represent.

These stories help lawmakers connect policy decisions to outcomes in their own districts. They also provide a valuable opportunity to thank legislators for supporting policies that have strengthened care or improved working conditions.

Before the visit, take time to prepare your story. Write it down, focus on the key message, and practice sharing it in a clear, heartfelt way.

Finally, remember to take photos during your visit. HCANJ may feature these moments in communications and on social media to showcase member advocacy in action and highlight your commitment to quality care. When capturing photos of residents and/or their families, please make sure to secure the appropriate consent.





QUESTIONS?

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