

# Top tips for meeting with your Michigan legislators.

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## Prepare: Research Your Legislator

- **Do your research.** Learn a bit about their personal, professional, and legislative concerns. What campaign promises did they run on? What does their website look like? What policy issues does it mention?

## During the meeting

- **Be prompt and patient.** Be sure to show up on time for your appointment and be patient if your legislator and staff are late - their schedules are often very full.
- **Do not ignore staff.** Staff members can be influential with their bosses and greatly helpful in influencing a legislator.
- **Keep it to the point!** You will likely have 20 minutes or less with your elected official. Make the most of that time by staying on topic and sticking to key talking points.
- **Provide personal and local examples of the impact of the legislation or issue.** The Day of Empathy is all about conveying lived-criminal-justice experiences to those with the power to make change. Share specific examples of impact!
- **You don't need to be an expert on the topic you are discussing.** It's fine to tell your lawmaker that you're not sure of the answer to their question and will get that information to him or her. Never make up an answer to a question.
- **Close the deal. Set deadlines for a response.** If your elected official hasn't committed to a stance on the subject before the end of the meeting, ask when you can check back to follow up on their response to your request.

## After the meeting

- **Compare notes.** Briefly compare notes with everyone in your group - but be mindful of what you say as others may be listening.
- **Send a thank-you.** Each person in the meeting should send a personal thank you letter to the elected official (email is fine) ideally as soon as possible after.
- **Follow up.** Review your notes and follow up with any additional information or resources that you said you'd get the official. Reach out if you've not heard from your legislator by the response deadlines you set together.

# Relationship building with your Michigan legislators.

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**Safe & Just Michigan** believes the most lasting method of setting up a legislative visit is to create a relationship with your area legislators. The first step is to look up your elected representatives.

You can find your state representative by using this link:

[www.house.mi.gov/#findarepresentative](http://www.house.mi.gov/#findarepresentative)

You can find your state senator by using this link:

[www.senate.michigan.gov/fysbyaddress.html](http://www.senate.michigan.gov/fysbyaddress.html)

Once you find out who your legislators are, you can click on the link which will take you to their webpage. Most of their web pages will direct you to a contact form that you can fill out. In addition, there will be a phone number that you can use to contact the representative or senator's office and schedule an appointment. You can also look on their website for more information. As another means of meeting them, attend their regular constituent coffee hours in your area. If you are able to attend their local coffee hours, this is one more way you can establish an ongoing relationship with your elected representatives.

Many times, elected legislators will get called away for business and that can mean that you will end up meeting with a staffer. Do not be deterred or discouraged if this happens, the staffers run the day-to-day operations of the legislator and help drive their legislative agenda.

Ultimately, the most important thing is that you create a relationship with your own legislator. Meeting with other legislators can be important too, but the elected officials most likely to listen to you and fight with you are the ones you can vote for and against.