
Connecting Congress to Your Community-Based Doula Program

Getting a media quote from your member of Congress

If a local member of Congress has been supportive of your work, providing a quote for your white paper news release is a great way for her or him to help celebrate community-based doulas.

Whether or not they have supported your work in the past, including a quote from a member of Congress will also show the public that community-based doulas are a unique approach that is supported by Congress and multiple federal health agencies. Asking for a quote is a great way to build a relationship with your member of Congress and share the white paper findings. Even if they don't provide a quote, you've started a dialogue about your work and the white paper's impressive results.

Here's how to ask for a quote:

1. If you have a relationship with someone on a local member of Congress's staff, call or email them with information on the white paper press release and request a quote. (If you have more than one local member of Congress who has supported community-based doulas, ask them both!)
2. If you do NOT have a relationship, call the district office closest to you and tell them the name of your organization and that you would like to include a quote from the member of Congress in a press release. Ask to speak to someone in the press office.
3. Provide the contact with the white paper Executive Summary and a link to the full white paper: http://www.healthconnectone.org/pages/white_paper_the_perinatal_revolution/362.php
4. Include information about how the white paper findings relate to your organization's work. For example, you might tell them that you have also experienced higher breastfeeding rates and lower c-section rates.
5. Remind them who in your community your program serves. Be as specific as you can, including numbers and names of neighborhoods, if possible.
6. Provide a deadline. If possible, ask at least a week in advance.

Inviting a member of Congress to visit your facility

The white paper is an incredible opportunity to show your member of Congress that your work is connected to the very successful and congressionally supported Community-Based Doula Program. A visit can help

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build your relationship with your member and it offers a powerful, visual experience of community-based doulas that we hope he or she will support in Congress.

Here's how to ask for a visit:

1. Use the sample letter provided to write your request.
2. If possible, deliver the letter in person to your local congressional district office. [Postal mail to congressional offices is notoriously slow.] If it is not possible to deliver it in person, send by postal mail.
3. Call your local congressional district office and ask to whom meeting requests should be directed. [Usually this person is called a Scheduler or District Scheduler, but not always.] Email this person the letter.
4. Follow up as necessary. One week later via email is usually appropriate.

Conducting a facility visit with a member of Congress

If you have secured a visit from your member of Congress, congratulations! Here 10 tips to make the most of this opportunity.

1. Before the visit, ask your staff contact if it would be appropriate to invite local media to the visit. Don't press too hard, but some members of Congress will be open to it.
2. Try to have a parking spot available for the member of Congress near the door. He or she may be rushing between activities, and the less time they spend parking means more time to see your facility.
3. Remember that the time they have available for the visit is often limited. Assign someone to be in charge of monitoring time during the visit to ensure you do not go over. Don't rush your member of Congress off, but don't force them to make an awkward exit either!
4. Try to schedule your member's visit with an activity at your facility that shows your work in action. For example, they might sit in for a few minutes on a class for new moms. Be sure to get permission from clients before the visit.
5. During the facility tour, keep attendees to a minimum so that you can focus on the presentation and keep things moving quickly. Make sure attendees know that time is limited and ask them to keep remarks to your member of Congress to under a few minutes.
6. Limit time spent sitting down. Your member will want to see the work in action. Prepare your comments to be given during the tour.
7. Remind your member of Congress about how this work is being successfully employed across the nation as shown in the white paper. And don't forget to tell them that the Community-Based Doula Program needs more support from Congress to help underserved families like the ones in your community.
8. Be sure to exchange business cards with the congressional staff in attendance.
9. Be sure to take a photo with your member of Congress. Ask his staff if you can share this photo with local media. Try to get photos of the visit in progress rather than only a photo of people lined up.
10. Remember to send a written thank you to the member of Congress after the visit.