



GRASSROOTS ADVOCACY



ADS
MASSACHUSETTS
DENTAL SOCIETY

What is “Grassroots” Advocacy?

Grassroots advocacy refers to a movement that grows spontaneously and naturally. This movement generally stems from a common interest or belief. At the Massachusetts Dental Society (MDS), grassroots advocacy stems from our members’ common interest in both protecting dentists’ livelihoods and ensuring patients’ access to the best possible care. To meet these goals, the MDS and our members advocate for and against legislation and raise awareness on the issues.

How You Can Help

Educate Yourself

The first step to becoming a strong advocate for dentistry is familiarizing yourself with current issues facing the profession. The MDS website and the American Dental Association (ADA) Engage site are both excellent resources for learning about legislation, grassroots, and political action initiatives on statewide and national levels. Discover summaries of current legislation and whether it has MDS/ADA support.

Resources



To learn about legislation in Massachusetts, visit massdental.org/legislation



To learn about federal legislation, visit cqrccengage.com/dental

Engage Your Legislator

One of the most effective ways of advocating for your profession is making sure that your voice is heard by your legislators. When you cultivate relationships with your Representative and Senator and let them know about the important issues in dentistry, they are more likely to support legislation that protects the dental profession and dental patients. There are several avenues to connect with your legislators.

- **Host a coffee hour:** These informal meetings with your legislator at your office or home afford you the opportunity to speak with them in a small group setting about issues that affect your practice and your patients. Just recruit three to seven of your dental colleagues to attend. The MDS Government Affairs team can work with your Representative or Senator's office to schedule a time that works for all.
- **Attend district office hours:** Almost all Representatives and Senators hold office hours in their district to collect feedback from constituents. This is a great opportunity to speak to the legislator directly, or with a member of their senior staff. Contact the MDS Government Affairs team beforehand to request the Society's legislative priorities for the session, and gain some insight on how to approach having a conversation with your legislator.
- **Set up a State House meeting:** Like a coffee hour, a State House meeting is an opportunity to speak with your Representative and/or Senator face-to-face about the legislation the Society is pushing for, as well as issues that have an impact on your dental practice. The Government Affairs team can assist with scheduling this type of meeting, and can attend these meetings to provide background on MDS legislation.

Attend Beacon Hill Day

Not ready to strike out and meet with your legislator on your own? Consider attending the next Beacon Hill Day!

Held every April, Beacon Hill Day is an opportunity for members to lobby their legislators at the State House on the issues they are facing. Annually, 150 to 250 MDS members from across the state take time out of their busy schedules to advocate for dentistry on Beacon Hill. Our diligent members try to meet with every legislative office.



Donate to the MDS-PAC

The Massachusetts Dental Society Political Action Committee (MDS-PAC) is an independent, non-partisan, political organization solely dedicated to the advancement of the dental profession. Through your generous donation, the MDS-PAC is able to support candidates for elected office, attend fundraisers, and build relationships with political candidates.

Learn more about how you can advocate in the best interests of your profession, visit massdental.org/advocacy

Tips for Engaging Your Legislator

- 1.** Find the right people to talk to. Find out who your elected officials are by visiting malegislature.gov/Search/FindMyLegislator and putting in your address.
- 2.** Engage with your legislators online. Sign up for their email lists and follow them on social media to see what type of issues they are talking about. Many elected officials use email and social media to regularly communicate and interact with their constituents.
- 3.** Engage with your legislators in person. Schedule a meeting with your legislator when they are at their district office to convey a message about a legislative issue. For all in-person meetings, make sure to be on time, be respectful, and go in prepared.
- 4.** Invite your legislator to visit your office. Organizing a tour of your office for your legislator is a powerful way to give them an up-close look at dentistry and dental professionals in action. Your outreach will help build a relationship with your elected official and their staff and help to educate them about the importance of the issues facing dentists and patients.
- 5.** Think bigger than yourself. Representatives and Senators, both on the state and federal level, want to do what is best for their constituents. When you engage with them, you should try to connect what you are requesting to the best interests of the constituency. For example, “I serve more than 100 patients who don’t want minimally-trained mid-level providers performing procedures on their mouths,” is more impactful than “I don’t like mid-level providers.” Showing that you speak for your patients and employees, as well as yourself, may make your legislator more willing to listen.



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