

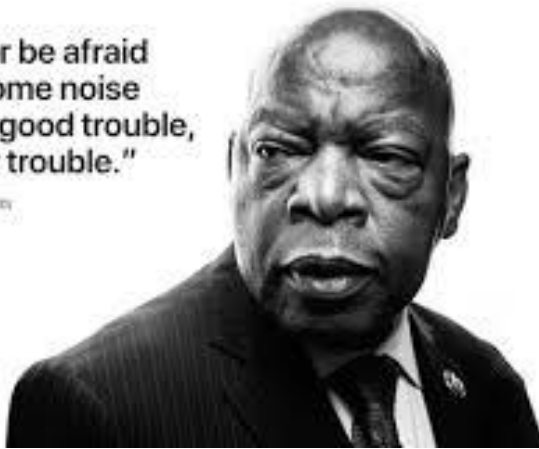


**The Unitarian Universalist Legislative Ministry of Maryland  
Immigration Advocacy Team (Task Force)**

**How to Make “Good Trouble”  
A Really Brief Guide to UU Advocacy During the Covid-19 Pandemic**

“Never, ever be afraid  
to make some noise  
and get in good trouble,  
necessary trouble.”

Rep. John Lewis (1980-2020)



**Representative John Lewis, 1940-2020**

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## Advocacy



Advocacy, it's written into the U.S. Constitution's First Amendment: "the right of the people to peaceably assemble and to petition the government...." And anyone can be an advocate. It takes passion for a cause, some knowledge about it, perhaps a personal connection and a few helpful tips.

That you are reading this suggests that you are passionate and committed, maybe busy. So, we'll keep it brief.

Being an advocate is not a full-time job. Sometimes, it can take only a few minutes to type your name and address into a prepared internet form and press the submit button. or you might spend a few minutes cutting and pasting suggested text into an email message, or you'll spend a few more minutes writing a personal message (likely email) to your legislator. If you have the time, you might schedule an appointment for a face-to-face virtual video conference with your legislator. You might make a telephone call, but you're likely to speak with a staff member. That's okay. Your message is being heard.

To be effective advocates we will need a strategy and must be familiar with the tools, techniques and mechanics of advocacy

### **Tips for Effective Immigration Advocacy**

#### 1. Get to know your legislator or policymaker

Find out who your legislator is. If you're not sure, visit:

[For Maryland General Assembly \(Senate and House of Delegates\)](#)

[For Maryland Governor](#)

[For Maryland Attorney General](#)

[For Maryland Counties](#)

[For U.S. Representative](#)

[For U.S. Senators](#)

[For President of the United States \(The White House\)](#)

[For U.S. Attorney General](#) (Department of Justice)

[For Secretary of U.S. Department of Homeland Security](#)

## 2. Sign Up for Your Legislators' Newsletters, UULM-MD Alerts

Take advantage of the newsletters, usually online, email or text messaging that your legislators may offer. Also, make sure that you receive email alert messages from UULM-MD. You can do this by joining one of the [issue advocacy teams](#) (task forces).

During the MD General Assembly session, UULM-MD's issue advocacy team leaders will send you information and action alerts, usually asking you to contact your legislators or committee chairpersons as bills are under consideration. You may receive sample text that you can include in personalized messages to your legislators.

## 3. Learn About the Issue

UULM-MD offers information and facts about the issue on its website. Visit [UULM-MD's Issues Page](#). These pages may also give you links to UULM-MD's immigration partners such as [ACLU](#), [CASA](#), [MD Legislative Coalition](#), [Jews United for Justice](#).

## 4. Construct an Email Message to an Elected Official

**Note: Legislators staffs count these messages, pro and con. So, volume is important**



- **In the Subject Line, write: "Constituent, Support/Oppose HB123 or SB456."** If you are addressing a Committee or Committee Chair who is not your legislator, omit "Constituent."
- Keep your message short, not longer than one page, stick to one issue. Make it timely; for example, while the bill is under consideration in committee (if your legislator is on the committee) or when it is scheduled for a floor vote; notices of proposed rulemaking have deadlines.
- Be sure to use the proper form of address and the correct spelling of the official's name.
- Identify yourself as a constituent. Identify the organization you are part of or represent. If you are a public employee, make sure you state that you are writing as a constituent and private citizen (to avoid Hatch Act or other statutes and regulations). If you have relevant professional qualifications, state them.
- Explain the purpose of your message early and whether you are pleased or concerned about it. Mention that you are seeking the officials support or opposition.

- Personalize the message. Is there a personal story that you can relate about the issue? Explain how the bill or proposed regulation affects you or your community or others
- The message may include information that the official may not have or suggest an alternative, particularly if you are opposed to the bill or regulation.
- If you offer any supporting evidence, please make sure it is accurate.
- Acknowledge any past support by the official
- Reiterate the action you hope the official will take on the issue and that you would like a reply.
- Ask if there is any way you or your group can help.
- Close the message. You may, for example, include your degrees with your signature.

## 5. Call an Elected Official

Don't be disappointed if you don't speak with your elected official or policymaker. They are, after all, busy people and we pay for them to have staff to handle our calls as part of their constituent services. Many legislators, particularly U.S. senators and Representatives have hotlines where you can leave a message registering your opinion on a bill. You may speak directly with a member of a state legislator's staff, which is smaller than a U.S. Senator's or Representative's. State legislators' staffs regularly monitor voicemail messages and keep count of pros and cons.



Start your call by identifying yourself. **"Hello, my name is \_\_\_\_ and I live [your address]. Please let [Senator/Delegate, etc.] know that I support/oppose [bill title and number] and urge him/her to vote for/against this bill because [give one or two reasons, briefly]."**

If you want to discuss the bill more fully, ask for a call back.

## 6. Meet with an Elected Official or Policymaker during the Pandemic

The COVID-19 Pandemic has effectively eliminated all physical face-to-face meetings with legislators or staff. Now face-to-face meetings will be virtual using video conferencing software such as Zoom. Many MD state legislators are scheduling windows of time for constituents to meet with them virtually.

Face-to-face meetings with officials, either physical when the virus has disappeared or virtual until then are an effective means of influencing public policy. Sometimes, because public officials are busy people, you may meet with a staff person instead. That's okay. The staff person may be an expert on the issue and may even know more than the legislator.

**To request a video conference with your legislator, call or email her office.**

- If you request a meeting using email, please include in the subject line: **"Constituent, Request Meeting, HB123/SB456."**
- If you plan to invite other constituents to participate in the video conference, make sure you have everyone's email address to give to the legislator's staff so everyone will be included in the email message containing the link.
- In the unlikely event you don't get a response in a few days, follow up with another email or phone call.
- Once your appointment is scheduled, the message may contain the video conference link or the link may be in a subsequent email message. Make sure everyone you've invited has the link.
- Before the video conference, organize your presentation, prepare several talking points, maybe a fact sheet; make an agenda and divide the speaking roles among the participants.
- Log-in on time; you may want to log-in a few minutes early just in case there are technical difficulties
- Don't be nervous.
- Most legislator video conferences are limited to a half hour. But it's up to the legislator.
- Offer to provide any documents and evidence that may help persuade the official or staff person including any talking points or fact sheets that you referenced.
- Make sure you are informed and prepared to answer questions.
- Ask for the legislator's support (opposition).
- Volunteer to help on the issue, assuming the legislator supports your position or is on the fence.
- Leave contact information,
- Thank the official and staff person.
- Send a follow-up thank you message along with any additional information that was requested

## 7. Testify Orally or Offer a Written Statement During the Pandemic

If you are confident about the issue you may consider testifying before a state legislative committee or the County Council. You also have the option of submitting written testimony. Contact the [state legislative committee](#) or the County Council about the procedures for registering to testify or submitting a written statement and if there is any specific format required. Note that if you plan to testify in person or virtually, you will be asked to submit your remarks for the written record.

In general, oral and written testimony should be brief, stipulate your position (for or against) and contain supporting evidence.

### Oral Testimony in the Time of COVID-19



Oral testimony during the pandemic in the MD General Assembly 2021 session is severely restricted.

Access to the Capitol and Legislative offices is mostly prohibited. All oral testimony will be provided via video conference software, such as Zoom. Contact the appropriate [committee](#) to learn about its rules for oral testimony and written testimony.

The [MD Senate will allow only 8 persons to testify](#) orally via video conference. Four can testify for a bill, and four can testify against it. The [House of Delegates is less stringent, allowing up to 50 persons](#) to testify virtually.

### ORAL TESTIMONY IS LIMITED TO 2.5 MINUTES

If you testify orally, you should address legislators' concerns and interests, if known. Be polite. Be positive. Speak clearly, make eye contact and do not exceed your allotted time. Avoid jargon, don't be overly technical or too detailed. When you write your full statement, prepare a summary with your major talking points that you can use for your oral testimony and then submit the full statement for the written record. This way, you'll be sure to get all your points across and not exceed the time limit.

## Submitting Written Testimony

When offering written testimony, you must follow the committee's submission guidelines and time frames. Most immigrant-related bills will be considered by the [House Judiciary Committee](#) and the [Senate Judicial Proceeding Committee](#). The MVA Data Privacy Bill may also be heard by the [House Environment and Transportation Committee](#)



You can find examples of written testimony at [UULM-MD's website](#)

## 9. Follow the Law

Because of our proximity to our nation's capital, some members of our congregations are federal employees whose participation in advocacy and how they relate to elected officials are governed by statute and regulation. If you are a federal employee (as I used to be) or MD state employee check with your agency's ethics officer to determine the limits of your advocacy efforts.

Of course, the First Amendment of the Constitution protects your right to participate in the democratic process. When advocating for our immigrant neighbors, particularly when contacting your legislators, make certain that you identify yourself as a concerned citizen expressing your own opinion. To be safe, under no circumstances are you to use your office phone, photocopier, fax, personal computer, paper, pens or any other equipment for your advocacy efforts, even after working hours. The smart and safe thing to do is to contact your agency ethics officer.

If you are not employed by the United States or Maryland, please make certain that you advocate for the issue and not a candidate for public office.

## 10. Use Social Media

As you are aware, UULM-MD communicates via its [website](#), [email](#) messaging, [Twitter](#) (Tweets) and [Facebook](#). Our partner organizations also have similar digital methods and many of us will individually use them. The Immigration Advocacy Team/Task Force will primarily use email messaging.

To the extent there is interest, our Immigration Advocacy Team/Task Force members may wish to participate in some form of file sharing such as Google Groups. Documents may also be shared with interested

individuals via a personal Google Drive or Microsoft OneDrive owned by the Immigration Advocacy Team /Task Force Chair. The advantage is that you don't have to send email messages with large, attached files and every individual doesn't have to store the same file on her personal computer or cloud account. This file sharing technology is how some of you may get this document. Most of the relevant information will be available on the [UULM-MD website](#).

## **11. What Does an Immigration Advocacy Team / Task Force Member Do?**

As mentioned earlier, being an advocate is not a full-time job. Sometimes, it can take only a few minutes to type your name and address into a prepared internet form and press the submit button. or you might spend a few minutes cutting and pasting suggested text into an email message, or you'll spend a few more minutes writing a personal message (likely email) to your legislator. If you have the time, you might schedule an appointment for a face-to-face virtual video conference with your legislator. You might make a telephone call, but you're likely to speak with a staff member. That's okay. Your message is being heard.

The most important task for an immigration advocate is to make sure your message is heard by your legislators. To be more effective, getting other members of your congregation to let legislators hear the message is equally important.

Here are some tasks:

- When the Immigration Advocacy Team / Task Force sends an email alert, please distribute it to other members of your congregation or groups
- Send email messages to your legislators
- Set up a video conference with your legislators and invite others to participate
- Call your legislators
- Prepare written testimony and submit it to a committee
- Monitor immigration legislation by visiting [UULM-MD's issues website](#) where bill progress will be tracked.
- If you can get some pulpit time, make an announcement about the legislation and ask people to act
- Write a brief message for you congregation's newsletter
- Recruit others to join UULM-MD
- Make a generous contribution to UULM-MD



For other ways you can help, please contact Jim Caldiero or Tammy Spengler at [immigration@uulmmd.org](mailto:immigration@uulmmd.org)

## **Sources**

Much of the information presented here is derived from several sources, among them the American Public Health Association, the University of Kansas, the Illinois Library Association, American Chemical Society, the Sierra Club. United Nations Association of the USA, Natural Resource Defense Council, UU's for Social Justice, UU Service Committee.

## **Conclusion**

Political Scientist Richard Neustadt wrote that "presidential power is the power to persuade." The same holds true for every American citizen. Our power lies not only in exercising the franchise, but in convincing our public officials to implement policies that are beneficial to our immigrant neighbors and to our nation and the world. Advocacy is persuasion; it is arguing coherently, forcefully, passionately for a cause—for the rights of all human beings.

## **For More Information and To Learn About Opportunities**

For more information about UULM-MD's Immigration Advocacy Team/Task Force and for opportunities such as becoming a Legislative Monitor, representing the Immigration Advocacy Team/Task Force in your congregation or organization, and more, contact Jim Caldiero or Tammy Spengler, [immigration@uulmmd.org](mailto:immigration@uulmmd.org)

## **Disclaimer**

Any errors of omission or commission are mine. /s/ Jim Caldiero