

*Talking points are helpful to inform a legislator about vision and eye health, to frame your message, and to support your advocacy ask.*

**Not every single talking point needs to be used in a meeting with a legislator and not every talking point will be relevant to your advocacy ask.**

*Talking points help you become more conversational as you develop your advocacy skills and grow in your knowledge about vision and eye health. As you become more informed about the issue you advocate, your talking points will change to incorporate new facts and information that can help you make a strong case.*

## **Talking Points to Open a Legislative Meeting**

- Thank you for taking the time to meet with me/us today.
- Before we begin, do you have any time limits that I need to be aware of today?

## **Talking Points for Introductions**

*Use the guideline of “Who, What, Where, When, and Why” if possible and relevant.*

- **Who (are you):** I am/My name is \_\_\_\_ .
- **What (is your reason):** I am here because I am passionate about preventing vision loss and preserving sight.
- **Where (are you from):** I am from/ I live in (city/state).
- **When (if you met with the legislator before):** We met last year during Prevent Blindness’ legislative advocacy day Eyes on Capitol Hill.
- **Why (are you meeting with them):** I am/we are here to meet with you today to discuss vision and eye health.

### **For example, you might say something like:**

- My name is Jane Doe. I am a constituent living in Smith City, State. As a person who lives with glaucoma, I am passionate about early detection of vision loss and getting patients access to sight-saving treatments. I am here today to talk to the Senator about a bill that can help patients understand their risk for glaucoma and how to access eye care that can help them protect their sight.
- **Note:** Allow an opportunity for the legislative staff to introduce themselves, too. You may also ask if they have experienced vision loss or know someone who has experienced

vision loss, too, such as a family member. This is a great way to establish a connection on the issue you are here to discuss with them.

### **Talking Points to Introduce Prevent Blindness**

*Use these if you are representing Prevent Blindness, such as during the Eyes on Capitol Hill legislative advocacy day.*

- Prevent Blindness was established 115 years ago as the nation's leading nonprofit volunteer eye health and safety organization.
- We are dedicated to preventing blindness and preserving sight through advocacy for public policies that seek to improve our nation's vision and eye health.
- Our mission is to help people of all ages, backgrounds, and circumstances understand their risks for vision loss and eye disease, and to connect them to eye care that can prevent vision loss.
- Prevent Blindness advocates on behalf of all patients who are at risk for vision loss due to chronic disease, the aging process, childhood development, and occupational and recreational behaviors that would compromise eye safety.

### **Talking Points on the Value of Eyesight and Importance of Vision and Eye Health**

*Often, it is useful to create a case for your advocacy by putting your issue into a bigger context such as national costs or lack of prevention efforts. Value statements can help to establish why your issue matters to you and why it should matter to others, too.*

**\*\*NOTE:** *These talking points are most helpful if you do not have a personal story to share about the issue. If you would like to share your story during a legislative meeting, this is a good place in the meeting to do so, and the talking points here can help you connect your story to the policy. For additional resources, please use the [Connecting Your Personal Story to the Policy and Framing Your Message](#) fact sheets.*

- Eyesight enables many aspects of our daily lives and productivity; yet we don't talk enough about how to prevent vision loss from happening in the first place.
- Unfortunately, we are more likely to address vision loss after it has happened. We accept it as inevitable to aging, a consequence of chronic disease or family history, or under-development in childhood or adolescence.
- In 2017, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention [determined](#) that 93 million adults in the United States were at high risk of vision loss.
- Patients face significant barriers in accessing vision and eye care, such as: costs of treatments and therapies, adequate insurance coverage for vision care or eye health care, and the lack of eye care providers who can treat them.

**Remember: you do not need to use every single talking point!**

**Pick 1 – 3 that resonate with you or strengthen your case.**

- For example, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention [estimates](#) that over 8 million adults (or 1 in 11 adults) who needed glasses could not afford them.
- A patient may also face major personal costs because of losing their vision, particularly if they don't have support.
  - For example, if a person becomes unable to drive, they will need to find potentially expensive transportation alternatives such as ride-sharing services or have a family member, friend, or a caregiver drive them where they need to go.
  - As a result of vision loss, people may be unable to participate in the occupational or recreational activities they once enjoyed, which can be very distressing and disruptive to their lives and livelihoods.
- Vision loss and eye disease contribute to or worsen many conditions like diabetes, stroke, hypertension, heart problems, mental or psychological illness, cognitive decline, and falls and falls-related injury – all of these are costly to the patient and to our health care system.
- Children are also facing significant problems getting the eye care they need.
  - It is estimated that [17% of children](#) who had forgone health care in last 12 months had also unmet needs for vision care.
  - Only 41 states require vision screening for school-age children (6 to 17 years) and just 26 states require vision screening for pre-school aged children (3 to 5 years). This means that too many children are not receiving the care that they need.

### **Talking Points to Make It Personal to Them**

*It can be helpful to ask someone else to walk in someone else's shoes for a moment. This creates a compelling reason why vision and eye health should matter to others.*

- I challenge you to imagine for a moment that you lost your vision suddenly, and to think about how not just your life would change but how the rest of your day would change.
  - How would you use your phone to call someone?
  - How would your workday change?
  - How would you get home safely at the end of the day?
  - Would you still be able to do the things that you love to do for fun?
- How would things change for you today if you knew you would lose your vision tomorrow?
- Vision loss—whether it happens suddenly or over time—can be a life-changing event, and it is too often the reality for many Americans who face chronic disease, genetic conditions, aging without access to eye care, or potential risk of injury.
- Given its importance and how much we value the ability to see, do you agree that it is time that we address preventing vision loss together?

### **Talking Points to Make Your Ask**

*Every meeting with a legislator needs an objective, or an “ask.” Below are some talking points around Prevent Blindness’ advocacy objective to increase funding for the CDC, which is often the ask during Eyes on Capitol Hill. You may model your own talking points around this example. Be sure to include things like how much funding you are asking for, what the legislation will do, why it is important, what problem it will fix, and other information such as broad public support, bipartisan support, or district/state importance.*

- I am/We are here today to ask Congress to support a funding level of **\$5 million** for the CDC’s Vision and Eye Health program and \$4 million for the CDC’s Glaucoma program.
- The funding for Vision and Eye Health will improve national-level surveillance and data collection at the CDC, which can tell us how many American have vision loss, severe visual impairment, or blindness and who is most at risk of vision loss and eye disease.
- With this funding, the CDC can update recommendations around early detection and intervention, which can help people understand their personal risks for vision loss and eye disease, make informed choices about their health care, and access the care they need.
- Funding for the CDC’s Glaucoma program will improve glaucoma detection, referral, and follow-up care for people who are most at risk of glaucoma.
- Glaucoma is a leading cause of blindness for people aged 60 and older, though it is possible for people younger than age 60 to develop glaucoma since it is a progressive eye disease.
- Many people who are at highest risk for glaucoma may not be aware that they have the condition until changes to their eyesight are noticeable. By this point, it is too late to restore any lost vision and slow disease progression.
- Funding for these programs can go along way to ensure people who are at risk of vision loss and eye disease understand how to access eye care treatments that can save their vision. I am/we are asking for the Congressman/Senator’s support of these vital sight-saving programs.

### **Talking Points for Legislator Response**

*After you have told your story and made your case, it is important to allow the legislator or staff an opportunity to respond to what you had to say and to ask questions. This is a great opportunity to provide any information you may have forgotten to mention or to learn how they are interested in working with you. Keep this part conversational but use the following talking points to help facilitate a discussion.*

- Do you have any questions for me?
- Can you tell me how the Congressman/Senator stands on this issue?
- **If you don’t know the answer (which is okay!):** Thank you so much for that question. I don’t have the answer for you right now, but I am happy to follow-up with you.

- How can I be helpful to you? What resources do you need from me?

### **Talking Points to Close the Meeting**

*This is the time to express your appreciation for the legislator's time and to make sure any follow-up items (such as providing answers you didn't have during the meeting or additional resources you plan to send) are acknowledged. Make sure that you do follow-up with any information promised.*

- Thank you once again for taking the time to speak with me/us today.
- I/We really appreciate the opportunity to discuss this issue.
- I/We will follow up with you after today's meeting and make sure you have everything you need to consider these requests.
- Please let me/us know if you need anything else.

### **General Points About Legislative Meetings**

*These additional points can help you prepare and set your expectations for the meeting with a legislator.*

- Not every meeting will follow the same flow, but it is important to make sure the legislator or staff understands the objective and purpose for your meeting.
- You may need to improvise a bit to keep the meeting on time, on task, and on message. Remember, this is a conversation! Don't panic but know how to steer the conversation back to your objective.
- This is not the time to get into a heated debate about the issues of the day. If you are meeting with an elected official, it is **not appropriate** to bring up anything related to his or her campaign—including whether you volunteered, donated, or how you voted.
- Usually, by the third or fourth time you meet with a legislator, you will establish a comfort level. Practice and experience are valuable in advocacy.
- You do not need to know everything about the issue to advocate successfully. You will gain new knowledge and learn new information that will help to keep your advocacy relevant. Besides, your story will be much more memorable than facts and data.
- Advocacy is about maintaining relationships, so don't worry about nailing your pitch or getting everything right. Following up can actually help the lawmaker remember the conversation.