

VIRTUAL LEGISLATIVE MEETING OUTLINE

Before you sit down with your lawmaker, review this meeting outline with your team and figure out who is going to say what. Scroll to the bottom for talking points, as well as tips on how to run an effective meeting and what to say when your representative doesn't support your issue.

Content	Point Person	Meeting Notes
INTRODUCTIONS (3 min)		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thank the lawmaker. • Group introductions: Each person says their name and where they live in the district. • Explain the reason for the meeting. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Discuss your connection to Habitat. ◦ We are meeting with you to advocate for stable, affordable housing. 		
PERSONAL STORY (2 min)		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One person shares their story of home. 		
LEGISLATIVE ASKS (5 min)		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We ask you to support: <p><u>(1) Increased funding for the Family Homeless Prevention and Assistance Program (FHPAP)</u> House File 4541 Senate File 4495</p> <p><i>This program provides emergency housing assistance funds that can be used to make mortgage, rent, and utilities payments.</i></p> <p><u>(2) Investment in Housing Infrastructure Bonds</u> House File 3326 Senate File 3257</p> <p><i>These bonds fund the development of affordable rental housing, supportive housing, manufactured housing, and permanently affordable homeownership through community land trusts.</i></p> 		
THANK YOU & CLOSING (1 min)		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thank the lawmaker for their time. Ask if they would like any additional information. 		

TALKING POINTS

- **The need for housing is significant and growing.** More than 1 in 4 households in Minnesota pays more than they can afford for housing.¹ In order to keep pace with growing demand, Minnesota needs an additional 10,000 units of housing each year.²
- **Housing is integral to societal wellbeing.** When people have access to affordable, safe, and stable housing, children do better in school, companies and workers earn, seniors thrive, and communities prosper. Housing is the foundation for everything else in our lives.
- **Housing is a justice issue.** Households of color are cost-burdened at a higher rate (40%) than white households (23%). Seniors are likely to experience cost-burden as well: 57% of senior renters and 20% of senior homeowners pay more than they can afford on housing.

In response to concern about costliness of bonding:

- **Housing Infrastructure Bonds are a proven, cost-effective, and targeted solution.** Housing bonds jumpstart new construction and increase housing supply. Housing infrastructure bonds are also a smart investment, leveraging additional funds from federal, local, or private sources.
- **Housing Infrastructure Bonds boost the economy and create jobs.** Housing development projects stimulate the economy and provide jobs to hundreds of workers.³ Housing bonds help provide workforce housing, which allows businesses to attract and retain employees.
- **Housing Infrastructure Bonds are a responsible, necessary investment.** We understand that you want to make smart investment decisions. Housing is a huge need, and we hope it is an essential part of any bonding package that comes forward.

In response to concern about needing to reserve funds for COVID relief:

- **We already had a housing crisis. COVID-19 has only made things worse.** The workers most impacted by the COVID-19 shutdowns, including retail sales and food service workers, are at risk for losing their housing. We need to prevent this and respond to the pandemic in way that mitigates the ongoing housing crisis, both for renters and homeowners.

To learn more about housing in Minnesota, check out these resources:

- Minnesota Housing Partnership [State of the State's Housing 2019 Report](#)
- Minnesota Housing Partnership [2020 Legislative District Profiles](#)
- Homes for All Minnesota [2020 Bonding One-Pager](#)
- Prosperity's Front Door [Minnesota's Housing Scorecard](#)

¹ *State of the State's Housing 2019*, by the Minnesota Housing Project, www.mhponline.org.

² Bonding One-Pager, Homes for All, www.homesforallmn.org.

³ Bonding One-Pager, Homes for All, www.homesforallmn.org.

TIPS FOR A SUCCESSFUL MEETING

- **Practice ahead of time!** Write down your top two or three points on an index card. Practice out loud for your family and friends. You don't need to commit anything to memory, but it's a good idea to make sure you feel comfortable sharing your message.
- **Remember that lawmakers are people, too.** Connect with your lawmaker as a person. Start your conversation by thanking them for meeting with you. Maybe ask them how their day is. When you are warm and friendly, you create the foundation for a productive conversation.
- **Stick to your message.** Stay focused on the legislative asks. If you veer off track, it will draw attention away from the issue of state funding for housing. Your lawmaker may try to take the conversation in a different direction. If that happens, you can say, "Yes, I agree that [*other issue*] is an important issue. I wanted to talk to you about state funding for housing." A simple, direct pivot is often the best way to get back to your point.
- **It's okay if you don't know the answer to a question.** You don't have to be an expert, and your lawmaker won't expect you to know everything. If you're not sure about something, just say so. Then, write their question down and tell them someone from Habitat will get back to them. (And then let us know so we can follow up!!)
- **When your lawmaker isn't supportive, keep calm and carry on.** It can be frustrating or nerve-wracking when your representative isn't receptive. If that's the case, take a deep breath, keep your cool, and try getting your point across another way. Check out the talking points above, including our responses to common pushback. Maybe framing the message differently will help.
- **When possible, relate the issue back to your district.** If you know of a nearby development built through housing bonds, or if you have a friend who purchased a home through a community land trust, use these examples to illustrate your point. Lawmakers will notice when an issue relates directly to their own constituents. Use the Minnesota Housing Partnership's [2020 Legislative District Profiles](#) to give you some ideas.
- **Don't focus on the number.** We purposefully didn't include a dollar amount in our requests for investment in FHPAP and Housing Infrastructure Bonds. For some lawmakers, the specific number has become politicized. Your message will be more impactful if you ask for "significant state investment." If your lawmaker asks you for a number, simply reiterate that we request "significant investment" and that we trust state leaders to determine what that will look like.