



## How to Make the Most of Your Congressional Meeting

### **Setting Up Your Meeting**

Meeting virtually with your Congressional offices is one of the most effective ways to advocate for global vaccine access. You will be able to meet with your representative at any time during Mobilize to Immunize, but please submit your virtual meeting requests **as soon as possible** since schedules can stack up. Keep in mind that most of these meetings will be with staffers in the Congressional office rather than the members of Congress themselves, who *want* to hear from you so they can pass along information and recommendations to their bosses.

If your representatives are available, aim to schedule your meeting in the time leading up to or including World Polio Day (October 24). It is more important *that* the meetings are held than *when* they are held, so please be flexible to when your offices are available.

We want to help you get your meetings set up, but we also want to coordinate so multiple people aren't making requests to the same Congressional office. Please let us know once you've put in a meeting request at [champions@shotatlife.org](mailto:champions@shotatlife.org).

**If you do not feel comfortable scheduling your own meeting, are having trouble hearing back from your office, or would like to attend a meeting with other advocates, please reach out to us ASAP so we can provide you with a list of champions from your state/district!** If YOU would like to take the lead with setting up meetings in your state, please fill out this form [here](#).

Most Congressional offices have an area on their websites to request a meeting, and we can also provide you with the direct contacts in your office. **If you don't hear back about your request after a week, feel free to follow up with the office again.** If you still haven't heard anything back, please reach out to us at [champions@shotatlife.org](mailto:champions@shotatlife.org). Here is a sample meeting request email to get you started:

### **BEFORE your meeting**

- ✓ **Review the talking points** and the **leave-behind** documents you'll be sending to the offices (found on [shotatlife.org/m2i](https://shotatlife.org/m2i) under the "#6: Meetings" section)
- ✓ **Note our main ask from the Talking Points:**
  - **We appreciate the House for supporting level funding (in line with 2021 fiscal year) for Gavi, UNICEF, and USAID polio programs. We are asking the Senate for a 20% increase from 2021 for CDC polio and measles programs.**
- ✓ **Set up a practice session.** Everyone who would like to join the meeting should also join in a quick practice (even if it is scheduled directly before the meeting) to virtually get together and divvy up the talking point sections. At least one talking point from each section should be covered, and someone should be prepared to make the budget asks. However, every bullet point does not need to be covered, as the meeting should be a conversation.
- ✓ **Practice your introduction.** Everyone should practice their short introduction with who they are, the city or district they're from, and a bit of their personal story that brought them to advocate for global childhood immunization programs.

- ✓ **Leave the “asks” to those who are comfortable with it.** For Champions in your group who may be newer or don’t yet feel comfortable taking on the “asks” yet, direct them to talk more about their personal story of why global immunization programs are important. You can leave the “asks” to the Champions.
- ✓ **(Optional) Contact Shot@Life for additional support.** Our team can guide you throughout the process, help you in those practices, and even join the meeting with you if you have a smaller group or would like a little extra help – just reach out to us at [champions@shotatlife.org](mailto:champions@shotatlife.org).

### **DURING your meeting**

- ✓ **Identify yourself:** Clearly identify yourself as a constituent of your member’s district or state. Share other information about who you are if it is relevant to the issue (for example, if you are a parent, member of a civic organization, business owner, scientist, etc.).
- ✓ **Be specific and factual:** Include the facts and our specific asks, making sure the information you provide is accurate. We can always provide information for you, so do not hesitate to reach out to us. Do your research on both your member of Congress and the issue, but you don’t have to know everything or be a policy expert to share your opinion! If they ask you something you aren’t sure of, we’ll get you that information so you can follow up with your office.
- ✓ **Be brief and timely:** These meetings tend to run less than 30 minutes, and you do not need to keep them longer than the conversation dictates. If they are receptive to our asks and you’ve covered everything you set out to, you can end the meeting on a high note.
- ✓ **Make it personal:** The best thing you can do as a grassroots advocate is give the issue your individual voice. Use personal examples to tell your story of why you decided to become an immunizations or Shot@Life advocate.
- ✓ **Be confident:** Your official’s job is to represent you. You may also know more about the issue than your elected official or their staff member you are meeting with - that is why it is a good idea to offer yourself as a source of information.
- ✓ **Be polite:** Always work on the basis that the government and your opponents are open to reason and discussion. If you are rude, your message will not be received, so be polite.
- ✓ **Be present in the meeting:** If you don’t know an answer, don’t google it even though you can. Even virtually, people can tell when you’re not focused on the meeting.
- ✓ **If they are receptive:** If the office is very receptive to showing support beyond our asks, consider asking them to *tweet something out for World Polio Day from our toolkit sent by Brian Massa* ([bit.ly/worldpolioday2021](https://bit.ly/worldpolioday2021)).

### **AFTER your meeting**

**Follow up:** Follow up is a really important step and a great way to build a relationship with your Congressional offices. Here are some things you may want to include in your follow up email:



- ✓ Thank them for the meeting (using our email follow-up template found on [shotatlife.org/m2i](https://shotatlife.org/m2i) under the “#6: Meetings” portion) and keep the lines of communication open
- ✓ The answer to any follow up question they had/needed (if it is an answer that may take longer to track down, you can let them know you’re working on it and will follow up again)
- ✓ The leave-behind document with the asks found on [shotatlife.org/m2i](https://shotatlife.org/m2i) under the “#6 Meetings” section (you can also send this over shortly before the meeting begins so they can reference it while you are talking)