

HOW TO MEET WITH YOUR LEGISLATOR

Message Template & Best Practices

First, consider the following before contacting your legislator to set up a meeting:

- You can **call** or **email** the district office to schedule in-district meetings. Find your **federal legislators' contact information here**.
- The legislator's staff who is scheduling the meeting will need to know **who** will be present and **what** you would like to discuss.
- Be prepared to have a meeting during business hours if your schedule allows.
- In general, legislator schedules can change at the last minute so stay prepared to adjust or reschedule if needed.

Meeting request template to be used for phone or email contact:
Subject: Constituent meeting request for [specific dates]

Hello, My name is [NAME], and I'm [your position, title, or other relevant information on who you are representing for this meeting. If you are doing this in a personal capacity, you can say, "I'm a constituent, as well as a parent/teacher/business owner in [your area]"]. [Add a little background about any farm to school work]

I'm hoping to speak with [Senator's or Representative's name] while they are in the district June 26-July 7 to discuss [my/our] priorities for the Farm Bill reauthorization and support for farm to school. Is it possible to schedule a meeting with [Senator or Representative] during that time?

[Include background on priorities, such as NFSN Farm Bill platform, or your own work].

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,
[Your name]

Preparing for the meeting:

- Practice telling your own story succinctly; make sure to talk about not just what you do but **why it's important!**
- Familiarize yourself with **specific policy "asks"** (such as, asking for their commitment to cosponsor a bill) and practice asking the question.
- Research the legislator's previous record, such as whether they cosponsored previous versions of the Farm to School Act.
- Research the legislator's personal background and priorities, such as a previous career as a teacher or remarks they may have made about what they believe are the most pressing issues. **Whatever a legislator's interest is, there is likely a farm to school benefit!**
- Gather information on the benefits of what you're asking for, such as the cumulative amount of farm to school grants the state has received, or community stories about the need for certain programs.
- Gather any materials (such as [NFSN's Farm Bill platform](#), the [Benefits of Farm to School brief](#), or your own communications) that you would like to provide them to read in advance or bring with you to discuss.

During a meeting with the legislator or their staff:

- Ask what they know about F2S already, including thanking them for previous support.
- Briefly describe your work or your community, including **why you are a supporter of farm to school**. Don't be afraid to be very basic and super high-level—most legislators or staff have no idea of the complexities or challenges of things like school food procurement!
- Focus your storytelling on the **specific problems** you would like the legislator to act on (such as, expanding funding for a program because there is demand in your community).
- Introduce the policy changes you are asking for. If you don't feel like you can speak in enough detail, you can always get more information and get back to them later.
- Make your verbal ask for support, such as **"We would like [Senator/Representative] to be a cosponsor on this bill."** Then listen for their reaction and address any questions.
- Leave your materials with them to review at the end (if you provide them at the beginning of the meeting, staff may focus on the materials).
- Follow up afterward with a **thank-you email**, and any additional information that the legislator or their staff asked for.