

# REQUEST A MEETING WITH YOUR MEMBER OF CONGRESS



Every August, members of Congress (MOC) return to their states and districts for summer recess. This is the time of year when they spend a longer stretch of time at “home” and focus on connecting with their constituents. Often, their goal during August recess is to get a feel for what is important to those whom they represent and to build support for their re-election. During August, most congressional offices will have more time and flexibility to consider and take meetings.

## **Background**

This August, in furtherance of our goal to become influential advocates for children, we will be requesting meetings with our Congressional offices. A personal meeting with your MOC or with their staff builds rapport, explores common interests, and lets your elected official know what is important to you.

Remember, the most important people to your member of Congress are those who have the ability to vote them into (or out of) office every two (for Representatives) or six years (for Senators). As their constituent, take advantage of this fact and know that conducting regular personal meetings and creating personal relationships with your MOC and their staff is perhaps the most impactful way that you can advocate for children, who otherwise may be overlooked by your elected official's policy and funding decisions.

Keep in mind that much of the time you will be meeting with staff, which is still incredibly important and helpful in developing your relationship with the member of Congress. Oftentimes the staff are the people who do the work on your behalf, so cultivating that relationship is critical.

## **Join Us in Taking Action!**

Our goal this month is to begin or continue to develop a personal relationship with our member of Congress and their staff. We will do this by requesting a face to face or virtual meeting with them to discuss children's issues. Do not worry if your meeting does not actually take place in August. The important thing is to take the first step and get your request in this month even if it actually takes place in September.

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Please follow the prompts below to secure your meeting and along the way please keep in close contact with First Focus staff for coaching and accompaniment.

1. Call the Capitol Operator at (202) 225-3121 and ask to be connected to the office of your member of Congress. When connected to the office, ask to speak to or leave a message for the scheduler requesting a meeting. Be sure to specify that you are a constituent and where and how you would like to meet (for example, in the district office or virtually).
2. Or in the alternative, search for your Rep's office contact information by name or by state [here](#) or your Senator [here](#). Many offices provide contact information for the office on their website or a request form that can be filled out to ask for a meeting.
3. The subject you would like to discuss with the office should be "domestic children's issues"—this will help the office figure out which staffer would accompany the member of Congress, or take the meeting directly, if the member is unavailable. If the office asks for more specifics, reach out to Leila Nimatallah at [Leilan@FirstFocus.org](mailto:Leilan@FirstFocus.org) for help in formulating the specific ask for your particular member of Congress (this will vary depending upon which committees your MOC sits).
4. Once you secure your meeting, contact Leila Nimatallah at [LeilaN@FirstFocus.org](mailto:LeilaN@FirstFocus.org) for coaching and accompaniment. Leila will work one on one with you to provide you the materials for your particular member of Congress and prepare you for success.
5. Remember, you do not have to be an expert on children's issues. Your member of Congress cares about your opinion simply because of your status as their constituent. Don't let the fact that you do not know a lot about the specifics of children's issues stop you. They do not expect you to be a policy wonk and, in fact, you will be more influential if you are just authentically yourself.
6. Take a look at the Ambassador [materials](#) for more background on how to request and hold a meeting with your member of Congress and their office and [how to](#) speak powerfully about kids.
7. Reach out to [Leila Nimatallah](#) for one-on-one support and encouragement along the way.