



VIRTUAL



Student Advocacy Day 2021

Talking to Legislators – Tips for Students

BEFORE STUDENT ADVOCACY DAY – REGISTER TO VOTE, KNOW YOUR REPRESENTATIVES

- Legislators may ask if you are a registered voter. If possible, it is best to register before Advocacy Day. To register, or update an existing voter registration, visit: <https://voterservices.elections.maryland.gov/OnlineVoterRegistration/InstructionsStep1>
- Know your elected representatives. Enter your home address at: <http://mdelect.net/> and learn about your delegates and senators - their bios, voting records, and more are available online.

MEETING YOUR SENATOR AND DELEGATES

- Most legislators really enjoy visiting with students; make the most of this opportunity.
- Be on time, be positive, and be friendly. Thank your legislator for taking time to meet with you.
- Keep in mind, most senators and delegates were once struggling college students too.

Students can be most convincing talking to legislators about how community college is helping you to become skilled and educated Maryland citizens and voters. It is best if you can share from your personal experience about how attending community college will help you attain goals that would be impossible otherwise. Students' personal stories can be compelling in a way that budget requests can not.

In addition, it can be helpful for students to be familiar with key legislative goals the colleges have for the 2021 legislative session. Please see "*Talking Points for Students*" in the **MACC Student Advocacy Day Tool Kit**. The talking points included reflect MACC's goals but are relatable to students.

By February, elected officials are already evaluating how to distribute limited state funds. (See reverse for more on Maryland's budget process.) Personal stories may be influential with some of those decisions. It is best if students can prepare some key points to share with legislators so they can be brief and focused when the time comes. Below are some bullet points to help with preparation.

BEST STRATEGY: ★ TELL A PERSONAL STORY ★

- Strong state funding helps to keep community college tuition affordable, making it possible for more students to attend college and get the education they need to improve their futures.
- If you can share a personal experience about how affordable community college will help you, you can make a convincing case for maintaining strong state funding of community colleges.

- **Example:** several years ago, former U.S. Congresswoman Donna Edwards spoke at MACC’s Annual Trustee Conference, and declared community colleges, “*a godsend*” to her family and to all students needing affordable job training and education.

Congresswoman Edwards shared a personal story:

- Following Fmr. Congresswoman Edwards’ father’s retirement from the military, he needed to quickly obtain job training to support his family.
 - Fortunately for the Edwards’ family, he was able to afford to attend his local community college where he received training for in-demand skills that led to a position paying family–sustaining wages.
 - As time passed, several other Edwards family members, including Congresswoman Edwards herself, were able to attend that same community college, and later go on to 4-year universities and then advanced degrees.
 - Community college provided a fresh start for the Edwards family and helped to launch a successful political career that has benefitted many Maryland citizens.
- **The above is an example of a compelling personal story that shows how affordable community college tuition helps families, local employers (by training workers), and state economies (by teaching skills necessary for well-paying and tax-paying jobs).**
 - **Your family’s story can be compelling too. Think about how jobs performed by your family members contribute to daily business and services in Maryland.**

REMIND YOUR LEGISLATOR COMMUNITY COLLEGE FUNDING INVESTS IN MARYLAND’S FUTURE

- Try to emphasize that support for community college is an investment in Maryland’s future that gives back to the state.
 - Investment is Maryland-focused because about 90% of community college students are Marylanders who remain in state after graduation.
 - Maryland businesses and economy reap the rewards of state money invested through a more skilled and productive workforce that contributes to Maryland’s economy year after year.
 - Better educated and skilled workers are more productive workers who can help increase the efficiency and profitability of Maryland businesses.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION - MARYLAND’S BUDGET PROCESS

#NoBRFA

- When the legislative session starts in January, Senators and Delegates start allocating limited state funds to items in the 2021 fiscal year budget, which begins July 1, 2020.
 - Maryland law requires a “balanced” budget, so the Governor often introduces legislation to reduce some of the proposed expenses.
 - This legislation is called “BRFA” (**B**udget **R**econciliation & **F**inance **A**ct, and pronounced “burfa.”)
- BRFA cuts often reduce the money budgeted for many items including support for community colleges.
- BRFA cuts can affect tuition, fees and program availability at your community college.
- Tell your personal story (see above example) to help your legislator see why strong support for community colleges helps students like you, and helps keep Maryland’s workforce and economy strong.
- **Community college funding is always a sound investment in Maryland’s future.**