

MAZON'S HUNGER ACTION MONTH

Toolkit for Meeting with your Members of Congress

Member of Congress:



Step 1: Build your team

MAZON's Hunger Action Month aims to achieve two goals. The first is to reach members of Congress to discuss the Farm Bill — the largest and most important piece of anti-hunger legislation that is up for reauthorization every five years. The second is to support congregations in strengthening their advocacy skills, growing their political power, and acting on our obligation to stand up for those facing hunger.

Think through who from your community might benefit from this training and advocacy opportunity. Remind them that no prior experience or expertise is needed on the issue.

Your team can include community members like:

- Clergy member
- Social Action Committee
- Synagogue Board
- Sisterhood
- Brotherhood
- Adult Learning
- Teen Youth Group
- Organizers of the annual food drive

Team Member Name	Email Address	Phone Number	Preferred Contact Method

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Step 2: Set up your meeting

The next essential step is to formally request a meeting with your elected official(s). We are targeting offices when their Members will be home from Washington, DC during the August Recess. MAZON will tell you which member you should target. You'll want to send a meeting request, addressed to the Scheduler in your Member's office. As a team, decide who has the responsibility for the following tasks:

Task	Responsible	Due Date
Call your Member's office and ask for the name and email address of the Scheduler.		
Draft and send the meeting request to the Scheduler		
Follow up with the Scheduler to secure a date		

Tip! Schedulers require a LOT of follow-up.

Make sure to call, then call again, and call again.

Tip! Don't overlook the influence of staff members

Be prepared to meet with either your elected official or a member of their staff. Cultivating relationships with staffers can be extremely useful. Staffers are experts working closely with elected officials to advise them on issues based on constituent input and persuasive information.



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Sample Request Letter

DATE

Dear Representative/Senator (Last Name):

As a partner of MAZON: A Jewish Response to Hunger, and on behalf of (LIST GROUP OF COMMUNITY LEADERS IN YOUR CONSTITUENCY AND/OR PARTICIPATING ORGANIZATIONS), I would like to request an appointment with you on (FILL IN DATE OR DATE RANGE). I hope Representative/Senator (Last Name) will be able to meet with (ESTIMATED NUMBER OF PEOPLE TO ATTEND MEETING) constituents to discuss the importance of strengthening federal assistance programs like SNAP in the upcoming Farm Bill.

I look forward to hearing from you about how best to set up this meeting. Please contact me at (INSERT YOUR EMAIL AND PHONE NUMBER HERE) at your earliest convenience.

Thank you,

Name

Organization/Congregation

City/State

Phone number

Email

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Step 3: Prepare for your meeting

MAZON will host an Advocacy Training on July 27th at 7 PM ET/4 PM PT. We will discuss the basics of planning for and running a meeting including the following topics. [Have all your members RSVP for the advocacy training here to receive the zoom link.](#) Those who cannot attend can watch the training recording afterwards.

1. **Develop an agenda:** Work with your team members during and after the Advocacy Training to develop an agenda for the meeting. A sample agenda is on the next page.
2. **Do Your Homework:** Do a little reading up on your Member of Congress. Check to see if he or she has taken any other action on the issue(s) you're addressing recently.
3. **Assign Tasks to Participants:** Each participant in your meeting will be assigned a specific agenda item to discuss so that the meeting flows easily. Assign the below roles to your team members.

Tip! Be precise and focused

Don't present a laundry list of issues. Deal with the one that is most important at the time and make sure your talking points are clear, direct, and specifically related to the issue. You may have as little as 15 minutes for your meeting, so it is important to use your time wisely.

Tip! If you have a personal or local example, use it

Legislators and staff will be most interested in local stories or data that they have not previously accessed.



Sample Agenda

Welcome and introductions

- Start with a thank you to the legislator and/or staff, then briefly have each participant introduce themselves and their organization or community role (no more than 30 seconds each!).
- Explain the purpose of the meeting: to advocate for policy solutions to end hunger in the upcoming Farm Bill.

Background on issue area

- Explain the problem that must be addressed by policy change. Be brief, concise, direct and use your own words. Be familiar with the Farm Bill Overview and Talking Points.
- Offer the policy proposal and why you support this position.

Personal story from at least one person connecting with the issue

- Make sure at least one meeting participant shares a personal story or insight from the local community. This will help illustrate key points and why the issue is important to your community.

Advocacy ask(s)

- Try to get specific answers: What are the lawmakers' priorities for the Farm Bill? What steps will they take to protect and strengthen SNAP? Legislators and staff may not want to make a commitment, so be persistent and ask the question in different ways to try to elicit a concrete response.

Discussion (if time)

- Ask "How can MAZON partner with your office to advance our shared goal of ending hunger in the U.S.?"
- Offer MAZON as a resource — we can send additional information as needed.

Closing

- Final thank you
- Before you leave, hand over a summary of your requests, contact info/business cards, and any other MAZON leave behind documents to your legislator and their staff.
- Don't forget to take a photo or zoom screen shot!



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Meeting Roles

Role	Notes	Responsible
Welcome and introductions		
Facilitator – one person will run the meeting, keep it on time, and often closes the meeting with the follow up plan.		
Note Taker – one person should take notes and listen to responses so follow up questions can be tailored appropriately.		
Background on issue area – at least one person should explain the policy priorities. Select one or more topic from our Policy toolkit and be familiar with the facts and ask.	Policy priority/priorities: 1. 2. 3.	
Personal story – at least one person should share a compelling personal connection to hunger. The story shouldn't take more than 2-4 minutes, but remember that the point is to spark conversation, so be flexible!		
Follow Up – one person should be designated as the “point of contact” or follow up person after the meeting.		
Report Back to MAZON – one person should be in touch with MAZON staff and/or fill out our Lobby Meeting report form, so we can follow up with the Member or staff if needed.		

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Step four: Holding the meeting

General Tips:

- Be flexible: During busy in-district work days, Members and staff pack their schedules with meetings. Your Member may be running late, especially if you have a late afternoon appointment. Come a bit early, but be prepared to wait around for a bit.
- As a constituent, you have the right to request a meeting with your elected officials, educate them about issues you care about, and share your voice. Don't be intimidated – they work for you!
- Stay focused on issues related to hunger in the meeting – if the meeting goes off-topic (e.g. politics about Israel), thank them for sharing and redirect the conversation to your talking points.
- Although you might be tempted, try not to argue with your elected official or their staff about politics – there is no need to be adversarial in these meetings. Stay polite and on message.
- Don't be afraid to acknowledge if you don't have an answer to a question. You are not meant to be an expert and this is an opportunity to follow up after the meeting.

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Step five: Follow up

1. Convene a quick debrief meeting with your group to compare impressions of what you heard in order to take accurate notes and plan effective follow-up actions. You can discuss what went well, what could have gone better, and what questions still need answers. Thank everyone for coming to help speak out on this important issue!
2. Send a thank-you email to all individuals you met with and briefly restate your “asks.” It’s a great opportunity to share follow-up information to answer any outstanding issues from the meeting.
3. Make sure to be in touch with MAZON and fill out a meeting report-back form so MAZON staff can also follow up with the elected officials if needed.

Dear Representative/Senator **NAME:**

Thank you for meeting with **[Names of attendees]** to discuss the importance of protecting SNAP in the upcoming Farm Bill. We are so grateful that you made time in your busy schedule to join us to reflect on the reality of hunger in America.

As we discussed yesterday, SNAP is the most effective anti-hunger program to individuals experiencing hardship and to our community at large. It is something people deserve as members of our community, not something that is earned. This is particularly important for populations that have been previously overlooked or ignored — military families, single mothers, Native Americans, veterans, LGBTQ seniors, and Americans in Puerto Rico. We will look at how you vote and act on these issues.

Add any specific points or follow up that was mentioned in the meeting.

Thank you for your time and for your concern for people who go to school, work, and bed hungry.

Sincerely,

NAME