Dear APRN Professional,

Thank you for agreeing to be a legislative outreach circle volunteer. To have a lasting impact on the legislative process it is important to establish relationships in Lansing.

The decisions made by the Michigan legislature directly affect the practice environment for advance practice registered nurses. They also affect the future of the individuals for whom we provide care.

The priorities for healthcare legislation depend on our ability to influence the process by phone calls, letters and visits legislators receive from their constituents. Remember that “all politics are local” your legislator cares what you think about health care issues, you are a voter, he/she will make an effort to be responsive to you.

As nurses we are good at forming relationships and advocating for our patients. Legislative advocacy is forming relationships with legislators and advocating for our profession and patients. We hope you can become leaders in your own district regarding nurse practitioner issues. If we do not speak for ourselves other healthcare organizations will speak for us.

If we are not bold and fight as hard as we can, we are not doing justice to patients and our profession. Thank you for joining us in this journey.

Respectfully,

[Signature]

Nancy George
President-elect
APRN Coalition Task Force
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INTRODUCTION:

The material in this guide was developed for legislative advocacy training. The contents are to assist MICNP members become advocates for the nurse practitioner profession in Michigan. Further, to assist the organization to have an effective consistent message with Michigan legislators and state policy makers.

Legislative outreach requires more than just a few visits to law makers in Lansing and Washington, D.C. Legislative outreach requires development of relationships, something nurses are very good at, with legislators, legislative staff, policy makers and departments of government.

MICNP has been active in the legislative arena in Michigan for well over 10 years and we have made great strides in educating legislators about nurse practitioner issues. As our organization has grown it has become apparent that we need to formalize some of the legislative advocacy activities that have been undertaken. To formalize the legislative activities we have decided to form Legislative Outreach Circles (LOC) within the chapters of MICNP.

The LOC is conceptualized to assist MICNP members in becoming legislative liaisons for their home districts. The MICNP LOC volunteer will meet with their home district House Representative or Senator monthly and develop a relationship with this elected official. These visits will take place most often in the legislator's district, not in Lansing.

The outreach that the LOC volunteer accomplishes will be reported back to MICNP Policy Committee and reported to the members at large in the policy reports. This will allow us to have circles of representation that link the legislator with their local MICNP constituency. The overall objectives for the LOC effort on the behalf of MICNP are as follows:

OBJECTIVES:

I. MICNP members will be an effective voice in the legislative process;

II. Members will have the skills to address legislative changes by engaging in the legislative process;

III. To help members mobilize and to achieve specific legislative goals;

IV. Improved communication between MICNP Chapters and MICNP Board around legislative outreach;

V. Increase legislative outreach.
I. THE BASICS
   a. While MICNP is the official voice of nurse practitioners in the state, individual members have a responsibility to promote the interests of the nurse practitioner profession and speak on the behalf of our patients.

   b. While nursing is the most respected profession, the competition for the attention and time of elected officials is great.
      i. Every year thousand of health care professionals compete for state and national legislator attention.
      ii. Some well known groups like Michigan State Medical Society (MSMS) or the American Medical Association (AMA) can afford to employ a large internal staff and pay several powerful lobbyists. MICNP has only one lobbyist.
      iii. We rely on our members to help ensure that the needs and interests of our clients and profession are adequately addressed by state and national legislators.

This LOC handbook offers a framework for legislative outreach that generates awareness and participation in advocating for MICNP. No one has time to waste in order to be an effective advocate, it is important to know the legislative timeline and how and when to impact the process.

REMEMBER:

   • Unified voice is extremely important
   • MICNP and your chapter undertaking legislative initiatives will demonstrate this unity, by presenting a clear message to legislators.
   • MICNP policy is working on the behalf of all patients and advocating for NP practice and is focused on legislative issues that impact all Michiganders.

A FEW RULES FOR ADVOCATING FOR YOUR PROFESSION

You are a source of information for your legislator. Legislators have little time, fewer staff and interest on any one issue is limited. Your role is to fill the information gap. You can fill the information gap.

Maintain credibility. There is no faster way to loose your credibility than to give false or misleading information to a legislator.

Know our supporters. Your legislator will want to know what group, individuals, state agencies and/or legislators are working with your organization issue.

Know our opposition. Be prepared by understanding the opposition’s viewpoint. Anticipate their arguments and provide the legislator with rebuttals and answers to those arguments.
Remember you are developing a relationship. Make the legislator aware of any personal connections you may have, no matter how insignificant. Let them know. It can make a difference.

Don’t be afraid to admit you don’t know. If the legislator asks you for information you don’t have, or asks something you don’t know, tell them and offer to obtain the information for them.

Be specific when asking for something. When you want a vote, information and/or answers to a question, make sure you ask directly and get an answer.

Follow-up. First write a quick thank you note for meeting with you. Later, follow up by inquiring if the legislator did what he/she said they would. It is important that you thank them if they did, or ask them for an explanation if they didn’t vote as they said they would.

Don’t burn bridges. Remain calm, it is easy to get emotional over issues you feel strongly about. However always remember to leave your meeting on good enough terms that you can go back to them. Remember, your strongest opposition today could be strongest ally on the next issue.

Remember You Are the Boss! Your tax money pays the legislator’s salaries, their staff, and all the operations for their office. You should be courteous, but don’t be intimidated. Most legislators will be thankful for your input.

II. KEEPING TRACK OF LEGISLATIVE ISSUES

The legislative power of the State of Michigan is comprised of 2-body (bicameral) Senate and House of Representative. The Senate has 38 members and the House of Representatives consists of 110 members who are elected by voters in identified districts. Senate districts have approximately 212,400 to 263,500 residents. Senators serve a maximum of two 4-year terms. House of Representative districts have approximately 77,000 to 91,000 residents. Representatives are elected on even-numbered years to serve a maximum of three 2-year terms. Legislative districts are drawn based on population figures obtained by the decennial census.

Understanding the Budget Process: Timing is Everything!

The state of Michigan’s budget runs on a fiscal year cycle that begins October 1 and ends on September 30 of the following year. Understanding the Budget process can help you be successful as you advocate for your profession and MICNP. The issues of budget often supersede any other legislative concerns.
III. TAKING ACTION

In today’s health care delivery system there are many influences—the high cost of healthcare, lack of access to care from some of our most vulnerable populations, and need for improved quality of care provided. As nurse practitioner practice changes it is MICNPs duty to meet these challenges. We have to work together to ensure that the legislative responses to health care achieves the goal—cost effective, patient-centered, and high quality care that increases patient access.

Remember, the state legislature exists to represent our views and our interests. By developing effective skills to interact with elected leaders in the health care community, we become active citizens.

LEGISLATIVE OUTREACH VOLUNTEER ROLE

As a MICNP Chapter, you serve as a critical information link to your fellow members. Your responsibilities include the following:

- To meet with your local legislator minimally monthly to educate and build relationships;
- To support MICNP legislative activities with your local legislator;
- Complete the MICNP legislative outreach circle report form monthly;
- To collect and disseminate information to your MINCP Chapter members on legislative activities and action as needed.

COMMUNICATION AMONG LOC VOLUNTEERS

The members of MICNP LOC will volunteer through their local chapters. The MICNP web site “members only” section will have LOC compilation of reports. This will create the legislative outreach circle. The reports allow MICNP to understand the individual legislators understanding and beliefs about different health care issues. These communications enable MICNP and its policy committee to share legislative goals and identify specific needs throughout the state.

You can also share successful projects and current concerns. If you need assistance you can contact the MICNP policy chair or our lobbyist. See MICNP Web Page for the policy link and the contact information of the current Policy chair.

LEGISLATIVE ACTIVITY
Legislative activity is any action calculated to influence the distribution of scarce resources or influence the status of impending bills before the legislature. It may include attempts to influence public opinion and stimulate legislative action by supporting or opposing specific legislative issues.

**ACTIVITIES INCLUDE:**
- Meeting with legislators;
- Preparing and presenting testimony before legislative committees;
- Initiating phone, email, fax blitz’s to urge a particular action on a specific or categorical legislation;
- Circulate petitions, contacting legislators, or participating in other efforts to impact legislative issues.

**HOW A BILL BECOMES A LAW IN MICHIGAN**

If you don’t understand how a bill becomes a law in Michigan. You can read about it in the documents produced by the government.


**IV. ELECTED OFFICIAL CONTACTS**

To schedule a meeting with your legislator either in the district or in Lansing, please call their Lansing office and ask to speak to their scheduler. Let them know that you are a constituent and provide them with your home address. Indicate whether you would like to meet with your legislator when they are in the district (Typically they are in the district on Mondays and Fridays or when the legislature is on break) or when they are in Lansing (Typically they are in Lansing for Session on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays). If you would like to meet with the legislator in the district, ask if they have regularly-scheduled constituent hours that you can attend. Or, work with the scheduler to determine a location that is convenient for both of you in the district, such as a local coffee shop or restaurant.

Contact information for all legislative members can be found by accessing the website links below:


Michigan Senate: Contact list: [http://www.senate.michigan.gov/FindYourSenator/michiganfys.asp](http://www.senate.michigan.gov/FindYourSenator/michiganfys.asp)
For written communication, make your correspondence as personal as possible. A well thought-out letter has more impact than a form letter or form email. Address the legislator as “The Honorable (First Name Last Name).”

If time is critical, the best way to contact the legislator is with a phone call, e-mail or fax to the legislator’s office.

If you make a phone call you will most likely speak with a legislative aide or staffer. Their job is to take and tally messages from constituents.

- Always identify yourself.
- Be concise, specific, and support your views with facts when possible.
- Be polite and respectful.
- Stay on message and keep to your main points.
- Always be sure to thank them for their time.

V. LOC LEGISLATOR VISITS

Face-to-face meetings with elected officials can be a very effective and valuable opportunity to voice your concerns and share your views about legislative issues, your community and your profession.

TOOLS FOR SUCCESS:

- Always make an appointment in advance—don’t just show up.

- When calling to schedule an appointment, identify yourself as a constituent and clearly state the purpose of the meeting. The following script may help as you make the call:

  “Hi! I’m ___________ from (state your home town). I would like to schedule an appointment to meet with Senator/Representative (Last Name) to discuss __________.” Indicate whether you would like to meet with your legislator in Lansing or in their home district.

- Research your legislator.
  - Know his/her history, especially any positions they may have taken on the issue you wish to discuss with him/her.
  - Research the legislators voting record, position statements, ratings from special interest groups and other pertinent information.
    - Check: http://www.michiganvotes.org/

- Prepare a concise statement for your meeting.
  - You will have no more than 15-20 minutes to speak with your legislator.
  - Write down key points you plan to highlight.
  - Discuss how the issue impacts the patients you care for on a personal level.
o Be familiar with the opposing arguments and be prepared to defend your views.
o Use local data (e.g. uninsured, # getting Medicaid etc…) and anecdotes about the patients you care for.
o Conclude by providing your elected official with your business card or contact information and your willingness to assist.
o Don’t use nursing jargon or acronyms and be sure to define terms.

❖ Bring written material with you.
o Leave your elected official with resources that provide quick reference or support to the points you’re discussed. A brief fact sheet, position papers or other resources, along with information about MICNP, is helpful.

❖ Be on time and be flexible with your time.
o Don’t be late. This may cause you to miss your meeting entirely. If you are delayed, call ahead. Interruptions can occur. Be flexible and understanding of the interruptions.

❖ Dress professionally
  o Wear business attire to the meeting. Dress conservatively.

❖ Be prepared to meet with staff persons, if your legislator is unable to make your appointment.
o It is not uncommon for scheduling conflicts to happen at the last minute. It occurs less often in their home districts, but it does happen.

❖ Be professional and diplomatic
  o Present your information in a straightforward, friendly and professional manner. Do not argue. Show the legislator respect and try to find common ground from the start. Use the relationship you are developing or have developed to express your views.

❖ Listen carefully
  o Your legislator may speak generally. Avoid issues and/or go off on tangents. Try and draw out specific answers to your questions.

❖ State the issue in simple terms.

❖ Be Inclusive

❖ Volunteer to serve as a contact on this issue.
o Legislators will often call on individuals they see as knowledgeable on a specific issue or policy topic. Make them aware of your expertise and provide contact information so they can call on you in
the future. Leave business cards with the legislator and his or her staffer.

❖ Say “thank you”.
  o Be sure to send a thank you note promptly after your meeting. This provides you with another opportunity to restate your views, send any additional follow-up information or request action on the issue.

❖ Never offer an elected official anything in return for their support. Never discuss campaign finances, PAC contributions or endorsements. If you are interested in having a political discussion with your legislator, let them know that you would like to schedule a separate meeting to discuss how you can help them with their re-election efforts. NEVER discuss legislative issues and political contributions during the same meeting. Furthermore, NEVER have a political discussion in a legislator’s state office.

VISIT TYPES

▪ Initial Visit (Ideally, a relationship with your legislator should begin before there is an issue to discuss.)
  • State who you are, where you work, and in what capacity.
  • Provide them some anecdote of care issue, either positive or a challenge in your profession.
  • Present them with a picture of your passion for your profession by talking in terms of the patients you care.
  • Offer to be a point of contact regarding nurse practitioner issues.
    o “If you need information on any issues relating to health care, please give me a call.”
  • Thank him/her for their time.
  • The end of the meeting should be the beginning of your relationship. Let your representative know that you wish to stay in touch.

▪ Relationship cultivation visits
  • Again state who you are, where you work and in what capacity. They will eventually get to know you.
  • Mention something about current issues he/she may be facing in the district. Feel free to discuss a recent legislative accomplishment or in-district success.
  • Share an anecdote or health care delivery issue.
  • Offer to be point of contact regarding nurse practitioner issues.
  • Thank him/her for their time.
  • Think about inviting legislators to speak at your Chapter meeting

▪ Issue Visit
  • State your issue.
• State what you want.
• Tell them why you want it.
• Ask about his/her opinion on the issue.
• Thank them for their time and express your appreciation if they are supporting your issue.

Finally, encourage patients, family members and friends to write to their legislators. Provide some guidance around the nurse practitioner issue. Don’t give up once a vote has been taken. Remember this is a legislative relationship. Continue to communicate. Remember to thank your legislator for any support and/or assistance he/she may give you as you continue to build your relationship.
VI. LETTER TEMPLATES

LEGISLATIVE OUTREACH CIRCLE VISIT REPORT
Fax to (734) 432-9884 or Email to: micnp@arounddetroit.biz

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Your Name:</th>
<th>MICNP Chapter:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What Legislator did you visit?</td>
<td>Senator/Representative:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date of visit:</td>
<td>Did you meet in the district or in the Lansing office?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does the legislator have personal experience with nurse practitioners?</td>
<td>YES ☐ NO ☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If yes, please describe briefly:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What did you discuss during your visit with the legislator?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Was the legislator receptive to your message? Please describe:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does the health policy chair or lobbyist need to follow up with the legislator you visited? If yes, Areas to follow-up?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
TEMPLATE FOR MEETING REQUEST LETTER

Date

The Honorable First Name Last Name
State Senate/ State House of Representatives
U.S. Senate/U.S. House of Representatives/Other Office
Address

Dear Senator/Representative/Appropriate Title Last Name:
On behalf of the of INSERT YOUR CHAPTER, I am writing to respectfully request a meeting with you to discuss a number of issues of priority to me and other constituents from the Michigan Council of Nurse Practitioners. We are hoping that you might have time to see us.
Below are the details of this request.

Date: INSERT DATE OR DATE RANGE

Time: INSERT TIME RANGE

Contact to Confirm Meeting: INSERT CONTACT (Facilitator/Coordinator)

Attendees: NAMES OF ATTENDEES

Topics/Issues: INSERT ISSUE(S)

I very much hope that your schedule will permit us an opportunity to meet so we can discuss ways that we can work together. I will follow-up with your scheduler shortly to schedule a meeting. Should you or your staff have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me at
PHONE NUMBER or EMAIL ADDRESS. I look forward to seeing you soon.

Sincerely,

First Name Last Name, Degrees
Title
Home Address
Phone, E-mail
SAMPLE LETTER TO YOUR LEGISLATOR

Date

Representative or Senator (Name of Legislator)
House of Representatives: Senate
P.O. Box 30014 P.O. Box 30036
Lansing, MI 48909-7514 Lansing, MI 48909-7536

Dear Representative/Senator (Name of Legislator),

I am a constituent of yours and live on _________give your street address—Legislators
love to hear from their own constituents.

I am asking you for your support of (state issue, if bill use bill number). This issue/bill
requires ________.

[Insert a paragraph about your own situation. Tell the legislator briefly about your issue
or your patients issue and how it affects your daily life. Give as much information or as
little information as you wish]

I hope I can count on you for your support.

Sincerely,

First Name Last Name, Degrees
Title
Home Address
Phone, E-mail
Date

The Honorable First Name Last Name
State Senate/ State House of Representatives
U.S. Senate/U.S. House of Representatives/Other Office
Address

Dear Senator/Representative/Appropriate Title Last Name:

I am writing to express my gratitude to you/your staffer, First Name Last Name of Staffer, for taking time out of your/his/her busy schedule to meet with me on Month, Day, Year to discuss with you/First Name Staffer the various issues of priority to me and the Michigan Council of Nurse Practitioners (MICNP). I wanted to take this opportunity to reiterate my request that you:

1. List the item(s) you discussed and the specific action you wish the elected official to take.
2. Support legislation that grants [insert additional action item].
[Provide additional rationale/background for your requests. This is an opportunity to reiterate key points, or to mention items that you may have omitted during the in-person discussion.]

Thank you again for taking the time to meet with me. I am most appreciative to you/First Name Staffer for your consideration of my concerns. Please do not hesitate to contact me, should you have any questions about these or other [issue]-related matters. I would be happy to be a local resource for you. I look forward to hearing back from you regarding the status of our requests.

Sincerely,

First Name Last Name, Degrees
Title
Home Address
Phone, E-mail
SAMPLE DISAPPOINTMENT LETTER TO YOUR LEGISLATOR

Date

The Honorable First Name Last Name  
State Senate/ State House of Representatives  
U.S. Senate/U.S. House of Representatives/Other Office  
Address

Dear Senator/Representative/Appropriate Title Last Name:

As a constituent and nurse practitioner, I am writing to express my disappointment that you did not sign-on/support [Issue or Bill]. I understand and appreciate that there are many reasons why [Representatives/Senators] do not sign such letters. However, I was not made aware as to the reason why you chose not to sign. As such, I respectfully request and would very much appreciate hearing from you as to why you did not join your colleagues in showing your support for this very important issue.

As a nurse practitioner, I know first-hand the tremendous amount of resources that are necessary to deliver quality health care to people of Michigan. [Make the case for the need for support]. As such, I feel strongly that [______]. I am concerned [______]. Therefore, it was my hope that you would call upon your colleagues to [______]

I appreciate your attention to my concerns and I thank you in advance for responding to this correspondence. Please do not hesitate to contact me should you have any questions about these or other ______issues.

First Name Last Name, Degrees  
Title  
Home Address  
Phone, E-mail
WE NEED YOUR STORY!

Please complete and mail or email to micnp@arounddetroit.biz

Name of Advocate/Self-Advocate__________________________________________
(Circle one below)
Level 1: Full disclosure including willing to have photo in newspaper
Level 2: Willing to have first name with last initial in newspaper
Level 3: Fully Anonymous

Hometown ___________________________

Age of Patient: ____

Your Story: What is your situation? Your story can focus on successes, challenges or both. (Your story can be as short as a paragraph and as long as several pages – whatever it takes to get a sense of what your needs are and what it will take to meet them.)