Everyone has a voice and when people speak up, they can make a difference. How to speak up and what all these terms mean when you hear them can be very confusing and intimidating.

Look in a dictionary or turn to Google or Wikipedia for these definitions and here is what you get:

- **Advocacy** – a process by an individual or a large group that aims to influence public policy and resource allocation decisions within political, economic, and social systems and institutions. Advocacy can include many activities that a person or organization undertakes including:
  - media campaigns
  - public speaking
  - commissioning and publishing research or polls
  - Or even 'filing a friend of the court briefs' or other lawsuits

- **Lobbying** – (often by lobby groups and sometimes paid lobbyists) is a form of advocacy where a direct approach or appeal is made to legislators on an issue which plays a significant role in modern politics or an appeal about how a decision may impact a particular business or profession.

- **Grassroots** – generally driven by the politics of a community as many volunteers in the community give their time to support the local party, which can lead to helping the national party. For instance, a grassroots movement can lead to significant voter registration for a political party, which in turn helps the state and national parties. Or when local constituents give their time to write letters to their local elected officials.

- **Advocacy Engagement** – Means all of these things identified above individually and combined to create a campaign to accomplish our goal.

Care Providers of Minnesota uses all of these strategies individually and collectively to advance our position on issues that impact our members. We are a membership organization that employs lobbyists and we have member organizations that are in individual legislator’s districts across the state that write letters, visit and call their legislators, attend Lobby Days, attend rallies at the Capitol, and host tours to let their opinions known.
Defined Simply – Advocacy Engagement means To Do Something About It!

How many times have you been in a conversation where you or others are debating politics and the conversation ends and you go home? Or, you are frustrated because you haven’t had a raise in four years? Or, you see people leaving your workplace for more pay or less hours or a different line of work?

Legislators are in control of funding and regulations: You should understand that legislators control much of the revenue (typically 82%) that nursing homes receive; and elderly waiver rates for home and community based services settings have been decreased by 15% in the last four years. In addition to funding, most of the regulations at your work are also set by legislators.

Tell your own story: Some legislators know this and some candidates know this, but unless we have told them they do not know. We must use advocacy engagement tools to make them aware of our needs. It is up to you tell your own story, before someone else tells it for you.

Challenges you face: I acknowledge that you have many challenges to face on a day-to-day basis in operating your building and contacting a politician is not on the top on your list. There are others who feel this will not make a difference that they won’t listen anyway. Then there are some that feel one voice doesn’t make a difference. And, then there are others that feel intimidated by the thought of contacting a legislator.

Why do we work in long-term care: Each of us works in long-term care for some of the same reasons but also for different reasons. Some people because they are rewarded every single day by the people you work with and care for. There are many different ways to define motivation, some are very scientific or profound, such as author Daniel Pink, and the author of Drive – Pink says that people are motivated by three things: 1. Purpose, 2. Pursuit of Mastery, and, 3. Autonomy. Then there are some definitions of motivation that are simpler – what makes you get up every day and do what you do?

Turn your passion and motivation into action: Because legislators play such a large role in what we do, it is important to turn your motivation and passion for what you do into action and make contacting your own legislator a priority. If legislators do not know our needs, they cannot help. I am asking that you leave here today and think about why you do this work and turn that motivation and passion into action by sending an e-mail to your legislators. Do not take your voice for granted, if you do not speak up, you will not be heard. And, if you can education even one legislator, we are on the right path.

Advocacy Engagement can be catching: Once you do this, you may find that you will motivate others to do it as well. We are not asking that you become an expert on all of the issues, just that you are an expert on your own needs. We will provide you with information and drafts of communications to make this process easier. You will not have to create the communication from scratch; you simply have to take the first step to identify your motivation and passion and then turn that into action. The Advocacy Made Easy Plan is intended to make some of this easier for you.

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How does a bill become a law?

1. The idea for a new law is drafted as a bill and introduced by authors in the House and the Senate.
2. It will receive a hearing in committee in both the House and Senate and makes changes if necessary.
3. After the committees finish debating the bill, it will go to the full House of Representatives and/or full Senate for a Vote.
4. Both the House and Senate vote on the bill.
5. If the House and Senate pass the same version of the bill, it is sent to the Governor for action.
6. If the bills differ, they will be discussed in Conference Committee.
7. The Governor will either sign the bill into law or veto.

Legislative Definitions

**Amendment** – an action that adds, omits or alters the language of a bill.

**Bill Author** – the Senator and/or Representative that introduced the House File or a Senate File.

**Bill** – an idea asking for a new law, or changing a current law or a proposed constitutional amendment.

**Bill Number** – the number assigned to a bill when it is introduced. For example House File 2312/Senate File 2215, or HF 2312/SF 2215.

**Committee Hearing** – a meeting of a committee when the public has an opportunity to speak about the proposed bill.

**Companion Bill** – Identical bills introduced in both the House and Senate.

**Conference Committee** – A group of either three or five members of each body that work out a compromise when the House and Senate pass different versions of a bill.

**Floor** – After a bill passes through the committee process, it is sent to the “floor”, in the House and the Senate where it may receive debate by all members.

**Legislature** – the name given to the entire group of Senators and Representatives.

**Omnibus Bill** – a term used to describe a bill that contains a number of other bills that are generally related to the same subject matter and generally spend money.

**President of the Senate** – the person elected by members of the Senate who presides over the Senate floor action and debate.

**Speaker of the House** – the person elected by members of the House of Representatives to preside over the House floor action and debate.

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Other ideas for advocacy engagement:

Care Providers of Minnesota staff will draft examples of communications

- Attend Lobby Day(s) at the Capitol (officially “lobby” your legislators in their St. Paul office)
- Continue to call or write legislators
- Call or write the Governor:
  
  Governor Mark Dayton  
  130 State Capitol  
  75 Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd.  
  St. Paul, MN 55155  
  Telephone: 651-201-3400  
  Toll Free: 800-657-3717  
  Or use the contact form on the website: http://mn.gov/governor/contact-us/
- Write a letter to the editor of your local paper or statewide papers
- Submit an “op-ed” (opinion editorial)
- Purchase and place a newspaper ad or website ad
- Make a presentation to local Chamber or other civic group
- Call in to local talk radio
- Attend Capitol Rally
- Offer to provide tours to local legislators
- Hold a legislative forum
- Attend other local forums and ask legislators and candidates questions
- Form or become involved in other work groups or organizations in your area including coalitions
- Donate to CARE PAC to support candidates that support the long-term care profession.
- Follow legislators on Twitter (they will follow you back) and you can hear what they are saying
- “Friend” legislators on Facebook where appropriate and you can hear what they are saying

Remember you are not alone in this. Care Providers of Minnesota staff are willing and able to assist.

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