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Communicating With Your Legislator – A Handy Primer

Writing Your Legislator

- Write your own senator or delegate.
- Write when it is practical.
- Be courteous and identify yourself as a member of VHF and/or HACA and as a constituent. Give your full address.
- Whenever possible identify bills by number. Otherwise, clearly describe the measure.
- Be informed about the issue and then write your own views/opinions from personal knowledge or experience. Form letters do not get the attention of the legislator.
- Focus on one issue. Be brief, but write enough to be clear. Give reasons for your position. Avoid professional jargon.
- Ask questions that require a response.
- Check spelling and grammar!
- Write when they do something you approve of, even if just a simple thank you.
- Do not threaten legislators or pretend to wield vast political influence. Do not try to instruct your legislator on every issue that comes up.

Model Address and Salutation

The Honorable _____ (use full name)
General Assembly Building, Richmond, VA
23219

Dear Senator/Mr., Mrs., or Ms. Last Name for Delegate:

Visiting Your Legislator

- Be respectful and kind to the secretary and the aide.
- Make an appointment. (It is equally important to visit legislators when they are at home as it is when they are in the General Assembly session.)
- Be prepared to talk on one or two issues.
- Be on time.
- Identify yourself as a member of VHF and/or HACA and a constituent.
- Briefly and concisely share your experiences and first-hand knowledge of issues related to living with hemophilia and obtaining necessary treatment.

- Leave written materials.
- Offer to get more information, if needed.
- Be willing to meet with the legislative aide if the legislator is unavailable.
- Send a follow-up thank you note

Telephoning Your Legislator

- Give your name and full address.
- Identify yourself and your organizational affiliation.
- Speak directly to the senator or delegate, if possible.
- Be brief and concise. Focus on one issue.
- Indicate your position.
- State what bill or budget amendment you are calling about.

Before the General Assembly Session

- Access the General Assembly website to identify your legislators:
whosmy.virginiageneralassembly.gov
- Visit your senator and delegate at their home office.
- Share any talking points that VHF and HACA are promoting.
- Motivate your friends and family to make contact with their senator or delegate.

During the General Assembly Session

- Identify legislation in which you are interested.
- Follow the legislation through action of subcommittee and committee.
- Find out your legislators' committee and subcommittee assignments. The budget legislation will go through the appropriations or finance committees.
- Contact your legislator when legislation reaches their subcommittee, committee, or the floor. Call them in their Richmond office and/or email delegates and senators (find address and phone number on General Assembly website)

After the General Assembly Session

- Write letters of appreciation to those who were helpful.