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How to Rally Support for Nonprofits

Charitable nonprofits can, should, and do advocate for their missions year-round. In fact, [everyday advocacy](#) occurs in multiple forms: advocating with donors to make a contribution, advocating with friends and neighbors to support the nonprofit as volunteers, advocating with talented people to work full-time for the nonprofit, and much more – including advocating with government officials for the best public policies. Advocacy is as natural as breathing when it comes to people working with nonprofits.

One of the best times for policy advocacy is when state legislatures are in session. During this critical period, nonprofits can advocate for their missions in the form of direct legislative lobbying for or against specific bills through formal testimony and informal discussions with elected officials as well as through grassroots lobbying by engaging the public in calling for a change. These actions can be key factors in influencing whether a bill makes it out of committee or gets signed into law.

An important tool in supporting or opposing a policy proposal involves the power of numbers to show broad public support for your position. One way to demonstrate widespread, unified support is for nonprofits to organize rallies of like-minded people to help the community be unified and raise the volume so policymakers pay attention.

Rally for Nonprofit Funding

On April 24, the **CT Community Nonprofit Alliance** (The Alliance) will hold a [Rally for Nonprofit Funding](#) to ensure that as many legislators as possible – as well as the Governor – know that nonprofits stand united in both their dedication to serving their communities and their determination to receive adequate resources to do so, meaning policymakers should not leave nonprofits out of the state budget. This year, nonprofits are calling for a 5% funding increase to address an array of challenges facing their communities.



Recognizing that mobilization of a thousand people to support such a nonprofit advocacy event requires lots of planning and advance preparation by participating nonprofits, The Alliance developed a detailed, yet clean and understandable [Guide to the Rally](#) containing all the information needed. The Guide and a related Rally Q&A Session primed nonprofit advocates – staff, board members, volunteers, and others – for the event so everyone will be well prepped for the special opportunity to communicate with Connecticut policymakers involved in the state budget process.

Here are some notable highlights of guidance and suggested action steps from The Alliance:

- **Mobilize Your Network:** “Please invite your staff, Board members, family advocates, people you serve and other supporters of your organization to the

Rally for Nonprofit Funding! Feel free to forward [our event announcement](#) or use the text/links in your own message.” The Guide included sample language for nonprofit advocates to use in their invitations.

- **Meeting with Legislators:** “With 1,000 people expected at the Rally, it will be difficult to find your legislators inside the Capitol if they are not expecting you,” The Alliance advised participants. To avoid missed opportunities, The Alliance provided information on how to request meetings with legislators.
- **Leave Behind Forms:** Most legislators’ offices want to follow up with attendees, and The Alliance encourages attendees to print and fill out “leave behind” forms in advance. This allows for legislators and staff to easily contact nonprofit advocates regarding any remaining questions or action items.

Caring Force Rally

Heading north, **Providers’ Council**, the largest human services membership association in **Massachusetts**, will hold its [12th Annual Caring Force Rally](#) at the State House on May 22. Building on the legacy of these rallies being held for more than a decade, Providers’ Council invited advocates who have never attended a rally in the past to join. Providers’ Council also encouraged veterans of past rallies to “break out your gold shirt, grab a friend, and join us once again!” Wearing the special gold shirts will quickly show policymakers the size of the Caring Force. Numbers – and recognition – matter.



The Caring Force's goal this year is to "advocate for the passage of our [Pro-Workforce Legislative Agenda](#)," which consists of two bills that would 1) create a [student loan repayment program](#) for human services workers, and 2) ensure a [livable wage](#) for private, community-based nonprofit human services workers. The Providers' Council developed fact sheets and made them available online so advocates can brush up on the issues before attending.

To build momentum, Providers' Council announced that they are also partnering with other organizations to hold regional rallies prior to May 22; advocates have been encouraged to register for the regional rallies and the annual rally. This added step ensures legislators will hear from as many frontline nonprofits as possible multiple times over the coming weeks. Importantly, it also allows nonprofits to build relationships and trust with their elected officials.

Clear, coordinated advocacy in droves shows policymakers a sense of the large number of people supporting nonprofits on specific priorities like inclusion in the budget or pro-workforce agendas. The message is clear: we must be heard.