



Educating the New Congress: Step-by-Step Advocacy Training Series for Homeless Educators and Service Providers

6-PART SERIES



**Part I - Getting Grounded:
Advocacy in the New Congress**

FEBRUARY 16, 2021; 3:30PM EASTERN

About SchoolHouse Connection



SchoolHouse Connection works to overcome homelessness through education. We provide strategic advocacy and technical assistance in partnership with schools, early childhood programs, institutions of higher education, service providers, families, and youth.

- Website:
<http://www.schoolhouseconnection.org>
 - Newsletter:
<https://www.schoolhouseconnection.org/sign-up/>
 - Federal and state policy advocacy
 - Q&A from our inbox
 - Webinars and implementation tools
 - Youth leadership and scholarships
-

Special Guest Presenters

Jamie Fasteau, Principal EducationCounsel

- Director of Education Policy, Rep. George Miller, U.S. House Education Committee
- Legislative Assistant, U.S. Senator Patty Murray
- Director of Policy, Emerson Collective, and Alliance for Excellent Education
- Legislative Director, US Students Association

Emily Webb, Senior Policy Associate EducationCounsel

- Legislative Fellow, U.S. Senator Dick Durbin
- High School Teacher, Denver, CO



SHC's Advocacy Training Series

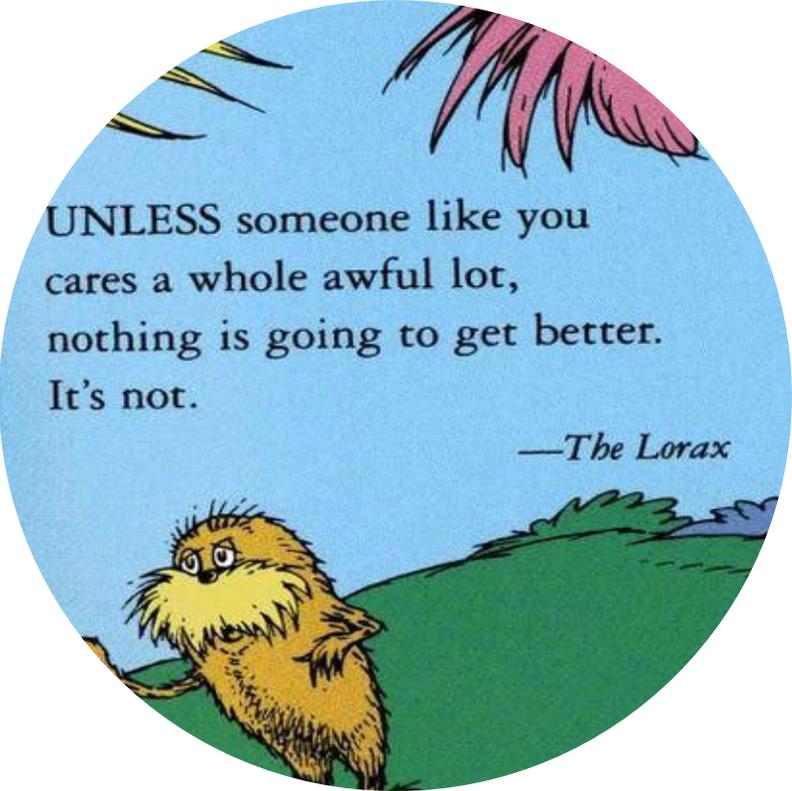
1. Getting Grounded: Advocacy in the New Congress
2. How to Effectively Communicate with Congress
3. What Does Successful Advocacy Look Like? Learning from Peers
4. Shining a Light: Using Media (and Social Media) to Boost Legislative Advocacy
5. How To Engage Parents and Youth with Lived Experience in Advocacy
6. How to Apply These Lessons Closer to Home: State Policy Advocacy



Objectives of Part One: Getting Grounded In the New Congress

1. **Why it matters:** making the case for constituent engagement
2. The difference between advocacy and lobbying
3. The unique dynamics of the 117th Congress
4. What's at stake for children, youth, and families experiencing homelessness
5. Most likely opportunities for impactful advocacy in the 117th
6. What you can do now

Why Advocate?

A circular illustration featuring the Lorax character, a small, yellow, fuzzy creature with large eyes, standing on a green hill. The background is a light blue sky with a pink flower-like shape and a yellow bird-like shape. The text is written in a simple, black, sans-serif font.

UNLESS someone like you
cares a whole awful lot,
nothing is going to get better.
It's not.

—*The Lorax*

- **You** can be the voice, **with and for**, our children, youth, and families.
- You are have **unique knowledge and a unique perspective** that will not otherwise be communicated to policymakers
- Others may claim to speak for you or those you serve - **but they may not represent your views**
- **Constituent engagement** is the best way – and **often the only way** – to change policy.

“Citizen-Centric Advocacy:” Congressional Management Foundation Report

1. Direct constituent interactions have **more influence on lawmakers’ decisions** than other advocacy strategies.
2. Congress places a **high value on groups and citizens** who have built relationships with the legislator and staff.
3. Citizen advocates are more influential and contribute to better public policy when they provide **personalized and local information** to Congress.
4. Citizens have **significant potential to enhance their advocacy skills** and influence Congress.

If your Member/Senator has not already arrived at a firm decision on an issue, how much influence might the following advocacy strategies directed to the *Washington office* have on his/her decision?



Advocacy & Lobbying: Example #1

Advocacy:

Families and youth who don't meet HUD's definition are vulnerable and excluded from help. Here's what that looks like in my community. Having flexible funding to meet their emergency needs would prevent harm and stabilize them. Here's an example of what could be done, and how it would help in my city/state.



Lobbying:

Please sign on as a co-sponsor to S. 220, the Emergency Family Stabilization Act

Advocacy & Lobbying: Example #2

Advocacy:

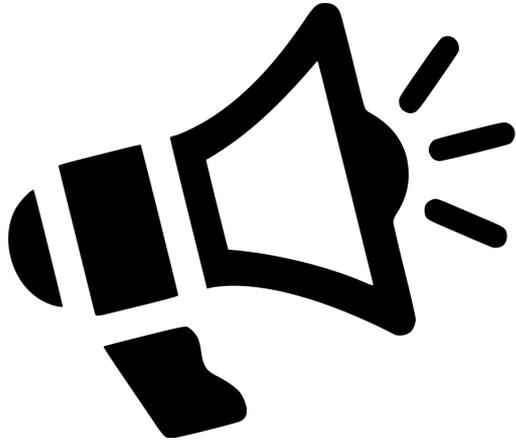
For the most part, previous COVID education relief dollars have not been targeted to homeless students. Without requirements to direct money to homeless students through McKinney-Vento, these students will continue to face basic barriers to access and support. For example, in my state/community...



Lobbying:

Please support at least \$500 million in specific, targeted funding for homeless students in the next COVID relief package.

What If I Still Have Concerns?



- Be mindful of the narrow, specific definition of lobbying: advocacy is just as powerful.
- **Even if your place of employment places restrictions on contact with Congressional offices, you can still advocate!**
 - Provide information to educate Congressional staff about the impact of proposed policies, but stop short of making a specific ask.
 - Find others to **“make the ask”**: National organizations, like SHC, non-profit community partners, etc.
 - Act as a private individual. You don’t lose your rights as a citizen just because you work for government or a non-profit.

Dynamics of the 117th Congress



House

221 Democrats - 211 Republicans
3 vacancies



Senate

50-50 split between Democrats and Republicans,
with Vice President Harris as tie-breaker

- Democrats control White House, House, and Senate (Democratic VP/tie-breaker) and so have the power to set policy agendas
- BUT the narrow majority in the House and even Senate split means bipartisan efforts will be important

More Dynamics of the 117th Congress

- Pandemic priorities being shaped by both executive and legislative branch
- High volume of competing demands from many human service sectors
- When things move, they move fast: it is important to be ready for action



What's At Stake for Children, Youth, and Families Experiencing Homelessness?

What we've heard:

- Youth and families experiencing homelessness, especially in doubled-up situations, facing increased risk of exposure to COVID-19
- Many children and youth experiencing homelessness are unidentified and disconnected from school and services
- High mobility: those in motels, or doubled-up, not protected by moratoria
- Evictions continue, despite moratoria, but less shelter capacity
- Concern about rent owed when moratoria end
- Barriers to accessing child care, services, and housing, including COVID relief, due to mobility, lack of transportation, eligibility rules,
- Unaccompanied youth face unique barriers - can't access stimulus payments
- More FAFSA documentation issues due to communication challenges

Federal Policy Shapes the State and Local Responses for Many of These Urgent Issues

Federal action will determine:

- Amount of funds available
- If and how funds are targeted to specific populations
- Eligibility rules for people and programs
- Instructions to federal agencies for how aid is delivered and carried out, or how federal law is (or isn't) enforced

What are the most likely opportunities for federal help for children, youth, and families experiencing homelessness in the 117th Congress?

- **HAPPENING NOW:** Budget reconciliation
- FY2022 annual appropriations
- Other possibilities:
 - Additional COVID-related packages?
 - Child Care?
 - Higher Education?

Budget Reconciliation and Youth and Family Homelessness (1)

- Timing and process
 - Expedited means of passing fiscal legislation
 - Legislation passes with simple majority (51), rather than a supermajority (2/3)
 - Expected to be completed by March 14th, when UI benefits are set to expire
- K-12 education funding
 - \$130 billion
 - Not targeted: 5% state, and 20% LEA, set-aside for learning loss and impact of pandemic on certain populations

Budget Reconciliation and Youth and Family Homelessness (2)

- Higher Education Funding: \$40 billion
 - Institutions must use at least half for emergency financial aid to prevent hunger, homelessness, hardship due to pandemic
- Child Care Funding: \$39 billion
- Head Start Funding: \$1 billion
- Emergency Rental Assistance: \$30 billion
- HUD Homeless Assistance through HOME Investment Partnerships Program: \$5 billion
- Emergency Housing Choice Vouchers: \$5 billion
- Earned Income Tax Credit for Unaccompanied Youth and Foster Youth

What Can You Do About Education COVID Funding Right Now?

Tell your Members that COVID education funding must be targeted specifically to students experiencing homelessness, or it is highly unlikely to reach them.

The message:

“I urge you to include at least \$500 million in targeted funding for the McKinney-Vento Education for Homeless Children and Youth program in the next COVID relief package. Without targeted funding, students experiencing homelessness are unlikely to benefit from other education investments, as they face significant barriers to enrolling, attending, and succeeding in school. This SHC/U-M study shows the consequences of not targeting of CARES dollars to students experiencing homelessness.”

What Can You Do About Education COVID Funding Right Now?

1. Edit the email message to include state or local facts and experiences.
2. Click [here](#) to find a contact sheet for Congressional Education staffers

NOTE: If you have an existing relationship with your local Congressional office, please also reach out to your regular contact.

Next Up: Emergency Family Stabilization Act

1. [Emergency Family Stabilization Act \(EFSA\)](#)

- Creates a new, flexible, emergency funding stream through Administration for Children and Families at HHS that provides direct dedicated funding to meet the unique needs of families, children, and youth experiencing homelessness under the broader definition.
- S. 220 reintroduced on February 4 by a bipartisan group of 11 U.S. Senators

What Can You Do About EFSA Right Now?

Urge your U.S. Senator to co-sponsor S. 220, the Emergency Family Stabilization Act

- a. Click [here](#) to send a customizable letter, send tweets to your Senator, or find the phone number of their office
- b. We can connect you to the right staff (email Alleanne or fill out this [form](#))

Coming Soon: FY2022 Appropriations

1. Education for Homeless Children and Youth Program (EHCY)

- FY21 funding: \$106.5 million. Less than 1 in 4 districts receives a subgrant.
- FY22 request: \$300 million

2. Runaway and Homeless Youth Act (RHYA Funding)

- FY21 funding: \$136.7 million
- FY22 request: \$165 million
- Foundational support to address youth and young adult homelessness

Opportunity: A “Dear Colleague” Letter on EHCY/RHYA Appropriations

- This is a request from EHCY/RHYA champions **to** other Members of Congress asking them to sign on to a letter to show support for increased funding.
- The letter goes to the Chair and Ranking Member of Appropriations Committees.
- The more members who sign on, the more support it signals to the chairs.
- **Stay tuned for an action alert!**

A New Administration: Influencing Federal Agencies

- Public comments on proposed regulations and forms (For example, FAFSA)
- Stakeholder meetings/calls
- “Dear Colleague” letters by Members to Federal agencies

**SHC e-blasts will contain information about these opportunities,
and how to weigh in**

How to Stay Up-to-Date on the Issues



- To see if your Member has signed on as a cosponsor of a bill, go to [Congress.gov](https://www.congress.gov), and type in the bill number or name of the legislation.
- Check out the Member's social media
- Sign up for SHC's [e-newsletter](#)
- Check out SHC's [federal policy page](#)

Questions?

Next Week: Part Two

How to Effectively Communicate with Congress

Date: February 23, 2021; 3:30pm Eastern

This webinar will cover the nuts and bolts of communicating with Congressional offices – even virtually. We'll cover how to prepare, follow up, and maintain relationships, and some basic do's and don'ts. You'll hear directly from Congressional staff about what works best, with time for questions and answers.

Presenters:

- Alleanne Anderson, Policy and Outreach Associate, SchoolHouse Connection
- Barbara Duffield, Executive Director, SchoolHouse Connection
- Anna Dietderich, Legislative Assistant, US Senator Lisa Murkowski (R-AK)
- Thomas J. Lucas, Legislative Assistant, US Senator Joe Manchin (D-WV)

A purple speech bubble with a white outline, containing the text "Let's Get Social" in white, bold, sans-serif font.

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Social**

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