

## Advocacy 101 Talking Points (See Advocacy 101 PowerPoint Presentation for Slides)

### Advocacy Overview

- Advocacy allows stakeholders to provide education and awareness on important information.
- In some cases, decision makers and other stakeholders – including business and industry – have an outdated view of CTE.
- It is critical for CTE advocates to share their stories and data highlighting successful CTE programs and students, and how the programs are helping to meet the demands of the economy.

### Definition of Advocacy

Advocacy is defined as “Any activity that seeks to influence policies.” Examples:

- **Educate** members of Congress about what CTE is and how budget cuts are impacting CTE students and programs – and, in turn, your local and state economies.
- **Writing an op-ed** for a newspaper that highlights the importance of CTE and how budget cuts are impacting your programs.
- **Messaging**, such as through the CTE: Learning that works for America campaign, helps those in the CTE community to share a consistent message about the value of CTE.
- **Providing testimony** before a congressional committee that tells about the success of CTE in your state, obstacles you face, and the impact of budget cuts.

### Definition of Lobbying

- “Asking policymakers to take a specific position or to vote on a specific piece of legislation.” Be sure to check your state’s definition and check with your agency about what you as a state employee are allowed to do. Examples of lobbying:
- Sending a “call to action” to staff members in your state education department urging them to contact their member of Congress to support an increase in funding through the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act.
- An example of advocacy, on the other hand, includes asking a member of Congress to visit your CTE program to see firsthand how federal funding or policy affects the program and the students.
- Your voice as a State CTE Director, CTE state-level staff or CTE stakeholder is essential to let decision makers know what CTE means for your state and community.

### Why is Advocacy Important?

- **Education and Awareness - You are the experts.** By reaching out to your members of Congress, as well as state and local decision makers, you can develop relationships and let these decision makers that they can come to you as the experts on CTE. On Capitol Hill, many members of Congress think of CTE as the old “vocational education” from when they were growing up. A major advocacy goal is to educate these members on what CTE is today, and how it connects students not just directly to the workplace, but also to postsecondary degrees and certificates.
- **Constituent Input and Decision Making:** Congress and state and local policymakers are most interested in what their constituents have to say. When a constituent shares data and stories of great CTE programs in that member’s district, the impact is much more meaningful and personal to them. If

your member doesn't hear from you, he or she may not realize what a big impact CTE is having in your community, or how certain policies are affecting CTE programs and students.

- **Advocate to All Stakeholders, Not Just Policy Makers:** Advocacy also includes activities such as presentations and events that inform the media, public, business and industry, or other stakeholders about CTE.

### **Advocacy Tips - Before Your Meeting or Call**

- Know your elected officials and CTE stakeholders: Do your research. Visit the official or stakeholder's website. What are their areas of interest? Do they already support CTE and education? Do they have a personal connection to CTE? Does a prominent business in the region rely on CTE for its workforce? Are they focused on job creation? Be prepared to share ways that CTE is impacting these areas that are important to the official or stakeholder.
- Local and Capitol Hill staff: Make an appointment to talk with your members of Congress in Washington, DC; don't drop by without an appointment - members and Hill staff are very busy and will likely not be able to speak with you without a planned meeting. When you arrive at the office, you may not have the opportunity to speak directly with your Congress member but instead with a Hill staffer.
- Schedule appointments and build relationships with district offices as well. These staff tend to be from the region and have strong ties to the district.

### **Advocacy Tips - During Your Meeting or Call**

- Be concise and precise - Congress members and Hill staffers are extremely busy so expect that you will only have a few minutes to get your point across. Plan out your message ahead of time.
- Stay positive whether or not you agree with the Congress member or Hill staff. Talk about the value of CTE to students and your community, but stay away from topics such as how budget cuts impact your job or partisan topics that assume a Congress member's position based on their political party.
- Share data and anecdotes that illustrate CTE student outcomes in your school, district, or state. Show how students participating in your CTE programs are more likely to graduate from high school and postsecondary institutions, and get jobs.
- Share stories of how Perkins and other legislation are impacting your CTE programs and your community, and how funding cuts are damaging these programs.

### **Advocacy Tips - After Your Meeting or Call**

- Send a thank you letter or email to your Congress member and Hill staff. In a sentence or two, reiterate your main point and share any resources that were promised during the conversation.
- Stay in touch with your member of Congress by updating them on any progress made by your CTE schools and students.

### **Ongoing**

- **Grassroots and Media:** Gather other stakeholders who care about your cause - including groups such as Career Technical Student Organizations - and organize an event to share information about CTE. Have your group connect pass out flyers, share information through social media, and link to your local news media sources.

## **Advocacy Resources**

See [www.careertech.org](http://www.careertech.org) or advocacy 101 powerpoint presentation for a list of resources.