

Guide for AQE Advocacy Day 2025 Lobby Visits

Remember: Lawmakers are just people, and they work for you! Don't stress about saying things perfectly. The goal is to share your story, your passion for the issue, and be your authentic self. That's the only way they understand how their decisions impact our lives.

What You Need to Know

- The Foundation Aid formula needs to be updated this year to better reflect the needs of students today, and ensure that every child—regardless of their background or zip code—receives the education they are constitutionally entitled to.
- Here in New York, students have benefited from the increases in education aid in recent years, yet, public school students in East Ramapo continue to suffer the negligence and harm of underfunding and privatization.
- \$1.2 billion for child care to raise wages of child care educators, and continue to expand access for families.
- The Solutions Not Suspensions bill would require public schools to use proven alternatives to suspensions, such as restorative justice, for minor infractions. It would also provide \$5 million for educator training to foster engagement and learning in the classroom.
- Raising taxes on the ultra wealthy and corporations to pay their fair share, (the “Invest in Our New York Campaign” so we can invest that money in education, child care, housing, and all essential services.

Goal for Your Lobby Visit:

- Inform
- Persuade
- Get a commitment from the lawmaker to proactively support AQE's platform!

Preparation for the Lobby Visit

Step 1: Assign Roles for the Meeting.

- MC/Facilitator (1)
 - The facilitator will introduce the group, and keep the conversation moving.
- Note Taker (1)
 - The priority is to take notes on the lawmaker/staff's comments or questions, and anything else that seems important to remember/note. Don't worry about writing down the group's individual stories, etc.. we already have that information, we just need them to hear it.
- Storyteller* (All)
 - This is the reason why we ask members to come to Albany. Your story is the most important part of these meetings! Everyone should take turns relaying in a

concise way, why they are here advocating and an example of the problem that must be solved.

- Make the Ask (1)
 - One person will ask the lawmaker or staffer directly if they will commit to supporting these initiatives. AQE will generate a script for this.
- Fill out google form documenting the follow ups needed from the meeting

Step 2: Write down your personal story to share with the lawmaker or staff. **This is the most important part of the meeting.** There should be time for all parent leaders to share their story about why these issues matter so much to them. Since we have a broad platform, don't worry about addressing all of the priority campaigns. Pick one to illustrate why you care and have taken the time to come to Albany.

Step 3: Practice with your group so that everyone is comfortable and confident in their roles!

Sample Script for School Funding

“I am a parent of X children. As the state works on updating the Foundation Aid formula, we need the change in funding to reflect the needs of our kids today. [Explain your child's needs, any programs that will be cut, and how that will impact your child.] This is why updating the formula in a way that provides quality education for all kids regardless of zip code is so personally important to me and my children.”

Sample Script for Child Care

“I am the parent of twin three year olds. My partner and I work full time, and for both of us, staying home to care for our children would set us back in our careers and future income. We have already had to switch providers, because the home based provider we originally sent our children to had to close when the rent became too high and the subsidies were not enough. At our current early childhood education center, they ask us to pay for diapers and other supplies because they are just barely making ends meet. We worry that this center will also close, and that the centers don't have the resources to care for our children and help them grow.”

What Legislators Can Do - The Ask

For School Funding

- Ask: Are you willing to commit to revising the Foundation Aid formula to address gaps, while ensuring no district faces a negative impact by changes in the 2025 budget?
- Would you be willing to speak to the Majority Leader/Assembly Speaker to let them know how important this issue is to you?

Follow up

- How can we follow-up with you? Could we schedule another meeting later in the session?

For Child Care:

- Ask: Are you committed to fighting for a permanent workforce fund, one that would allow child care educators to stay in the field so kids can keep their caregivers and teachers?
- Would you be willing to speak to the Majority Leader/Assembly Speaker to let them know how important this is to you?
- How can we follow-up with you? Could we schedule another meeting later in the session?

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Lobbying Tips

1. It's ok to interrupt to get back on track (you probably will have to).
2. It's ok to say you "don't know" to a question, and let them know that AQE is happy to follow up with an answer for their office.
3. Remember, the burden is on them as lawmakers to come up with solutions, not you as a parent. Your job is to share your experience and make the ask. You can say something like, "I understand this is a difficult problem. As a parent, I am here to share how this issue is impacting myself and my family, and ask for your leadership in getting to a solution."
4. Get a response to the ask (yes or no), wait for them to answer.
5. Do not get sidetracked if they bring up facts you're unfamiliar with or try to avoid responsibility by blaming someone else, stick to your talking points and keep the focus on them.
6. Have fun! Flex your muscles as a voter and a parent.