Virtual and Telephone Town Hall Sample Questions and Tips

Virtual and telephone town halls are a great opportunity to ask your Members of Congress about their support for mentoring and youth development.

How does a Virtual or Telephone Town Hall Work?

- Visit your Members of Congress’ website and sign up for their newsletter which will often put you on their list to call or email if they are hosting a virtual or telephone town hall.
- On the day or day before the telephone town hall, you will receive a phone call via a recorded message from your Member of Congress asking if you would like to listen into a town hall by pressing a specific number. If you press the number, you will be placed into the call. If the call goes to voicemail, they will leave a message providing you instructions on how to call into the town hall. Once on the call, all participants except the Member of Congress are muted.
- During the call, you can ask a question by pressing a specific number. This will bring you to a staffer where you will ask your question and they will put it into a queue for you (the Member of Congress receives a typed version of your question). There are a lot of questions asked by constituents so in order to increase the potential that your question is asked during the town hall use the tips at the end of this guide.

Below are some sample questions for you to use or get ideas for formulating your own.

- Youth mentoring plays an important role in our community providing young people with support in academic achievement, workforce development and personal growth. In response to COVID-19, mentors have become even more instrumental in their support for young people and their families, helping them access essential services and other critical supports. Currently Congress only funds one mentoring-specific program despite the need and effectiveness of quality mentoring programs. Can you commit to being a champion for the Youth Mentoring grant and funding it at $120 million?

- [NAME OF YOUR ORGANIZATION] serves [INSERT NUMBER OF YOUNG PEOPLE] young people in our community and our mission is to close the mentoring gap for youth in our city. We have mentors from across the city who help support young people academically and personally. We’d like for you to attend a virtual site visit with us and meet with some of our matches so they can tell you firsthand about their experiences and how we are equipped to use our social capital and connections with other social service providers to connect young people and their families with the support they need right now to navigate these challenges during this difficult time. Would you be interested in visiting with us virtually?

- Foster youth are an especially vulnerable but resilient population who benefit from the presence of a consistent caring adult in their lives. Bipartisan Representatives Bass (D-CA) and Bacon (R-NE) introduced H.R. 3061, the Foster Youth Mentoring Act to ensure that foster youth have the supportive relationships and access to other critical services they need to thrive.
  - If House Member: Would you co-sponsor this legislation?
  - If Senator: Would you consider introducing similar legislation in the House?
Quality mentoring programs that support trauma-informed care while supporting college access and workforce development training are crucial to helping young people thrive. Senator Durbin (D-IL) plans to reintroduce The Mentoring to Succeed Act to reduce community violence across the nation and provide young people with healthy and productive pathways to careers. Would you co-sponsor this legislation?
  - **If Senator:** Would you co-sponsor this legislation?
  - **If House Member:** Would you co-sponsoring a bill like this in the House?

As you may know, September is Attendance Awareness Month, an important time to bring attention to addressing the root causes of chronic absence in school. Bipartisan Representatives Tim Ryan (D-OH) and Herrera-Beutler (R-WA) introduced H.R. 4220, The Chronic Absenteeism Reduction in Every School Act to provide young people with supportive mentoring relationships and other critical services to improve attendance. Would you co-sponsor this legislation?
  - **If House Member:** Would you co-sponsor this legislation?
  - **If Senator:** Would you consider introducing similar legislation in the House?

During a Virtual or Telephone Town Hall, you may ask questions or tell a story about mentoring in your community, just remember a few things:

- Try to find a tangible ask for the Member of Congress so they can respond to your question.
- Frame your question in a courteous way so that your working relationship with the office stays positive. Avoid partisanship and references to upcoming elections.
- Prepare to follow-up with their staff to ensure that have the relevant information.
- Do not be disappointed if they don’t give an exact answer to your question, this is why follow-up visits and messages are so important!