

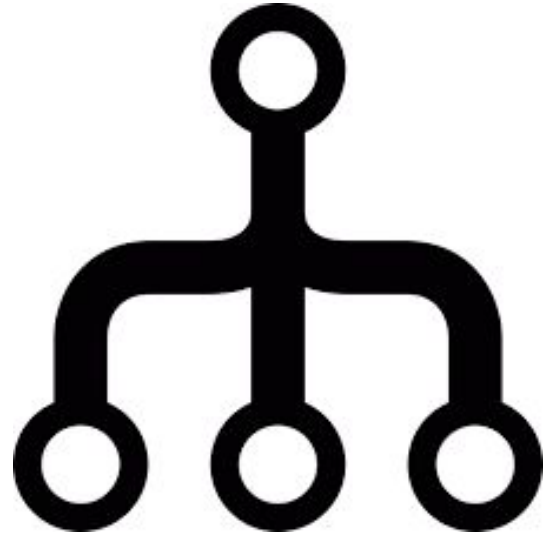
The background of the slide is a photograph of the Massachusetts State House. The central focus is the large, golden dome, which is partially obscured by a large, light pink oval graphic. The building's facade is made of red brick with white window frames and classical architectural details. The sky is blue with some white clouds.

Public Health Advocacy

Alexis Walls, Massachusetts Public Health Association
MHOA 2024 Summer Webinar Series

Learning Objectives

1. Develop of foundational understanding of how the Massachusetts Legislature works.
2. Develop a foundational understanding of how you can affect change through the Legislature, including when the best times are for advocacy and best practices for lobbying/advocacy.
3. Understand the difference between advocacy and lobbying, and when it is okay to lobby.



Legislative Structure

Who control the levers of change?

Why is the legislature important?

- Discusses and votes on proposed laws
- Approves the state budget
- Establishes the courts
- Has some oversight over state agencies
- Can override the governor's veto with a two-thirds vote
- Perform services for their constituents and work with cities and towns within their districts

Breaking down the legislature

Answer the following multiple choice poll questions to see how familiar you are with the structure and rhythms of the legislature.

How many state reps do we have in MA?

A. 20

B. 100

C. 160

D. 200

How many state reps do we have in MA?

**Answer: C. 160 state representatives
(1 per 40,000 constituents)**

How many state senators do we have in MA?

A. 10

B. 40

C. 60

D. 70

How many state senators do we have in MA?
Answer: B. 40 state senators
(1 per 160,000 constituents)

How long is a legislator's term?

- A. 1 year
- B. 2 years
- C. 4 years
- D. 5 years

How long is a legislator's term?

Answer: B. 2 years

How often do legislators meet?

A. Year-round in a 2 yr session

B. 6 months in a 2 yr session

C. Year-round in a 1 yr session

D. 2 months in a 3 yr session

How often do legislators meet?

**Answer: Year-round in 2-year session
(current session Jan 2023- Dec 2024)**

Who holds the power?

- House Leadership
 - Speaker of the House
 - Majority Leader
- Senate Leadership
 - Senate President
 - Majority Leader
- Committee Chairs
- YOU



Committees include...

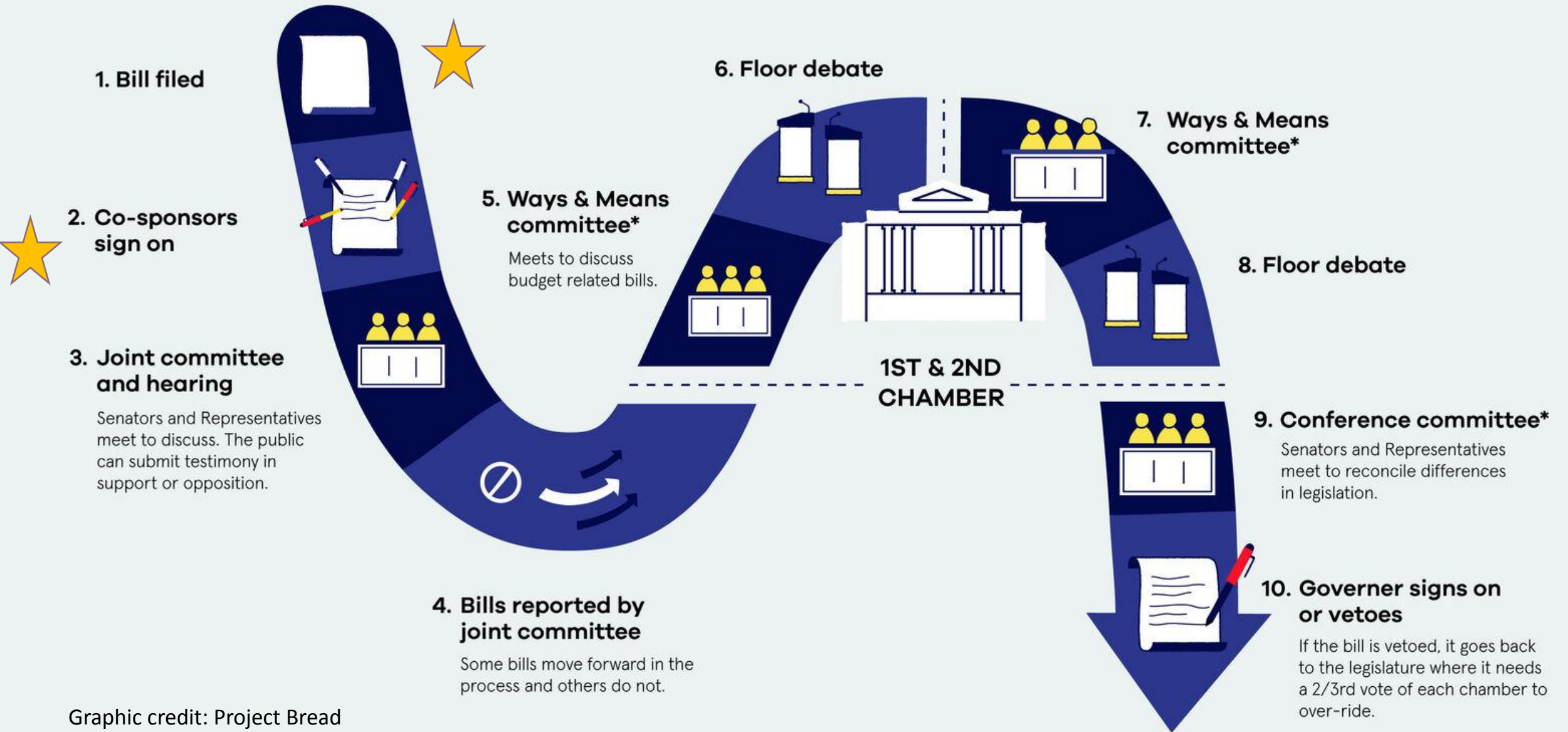
- Ways & Means
- EconDev & Emerging Tech
- Health Care Financing
- Elder Affairs
- Education
- Community Dev & Small Businesses
- Munies & Regional Govt
- ***Public Health***
- Transportation
- Housing
- Labor & Workforce Dev.
- Mental Health, SU & Recovery
- Children, Families & Persons w/Disabilities
- Joint Committee on Racial Equity, Civil Rights, and Inclusion



Legislative Process

When and how do we push the levers of change?

How a bill becomes a law in Massachusetts



Common advocacy tactics

- In-district meeting
- State House meeting
- Call-in days
- Email/snail mail
- Petition
- Op-ed/letter-to-the editor
- Social media
- Legislative breakfast
- Hearing
- Special event/rally



Don't forget your secret ingredients!

Solutions
over
Problems

Clear Ask

Stories + Data

Advocacy Pro Tips

Do

- Remember legislators are just people
- Mention that you are a constituent
- Lead with your experience/expertise
- Be polite, friendly, and patient
- Be concise and to the point
- Make the issue personal (remember: stories are stickier than data)
- Be prepared to talk with staff who work with your elected official
- Thank them and follow-up

Don't

- Assume someone else is contacting your legislators about this issue
- Be intimidated
- Be dishonest or exaggerate
- Be afraid to say you don't know
- Forget your power

For effective, strategic advocacy...

Connect with organizations like MPHA on campaigns you care about! They analyze policy, build coalitions, and know when and how to take action to influence legislators.

[MA for Overdose Prevention Centers](#) - harm reduction facilities

[Homes for All MA](#) - housing justice

[SAPHE 2.0 Coalition](#) - local public health infrastructure

<https://malegislature.gov>

THE 189TH GENERAL COURT OF THE
COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS

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Search the Legislature...



MASSACHUSETTS
PUBLIC HEALTH ASSOCIATION
Action for Equity in Health

Who are your legislators?

You can identify both your legislators
by visiting the following website:

[https://malegislature.gov/Search/Find
MyLegislator](https://malegislature.gov/Search/FindMyLegislator)



Meeting with Your Legislator Worksheet



Building Relationships for Better Advocacy



What about lobbying?

What is lobbying?

Direct Lobbying

1. Communication to an elected official or staffer +
2. Specific legislation +
3. An opinion on that legislation

Grassroots Lobbying

1. Communication to people +
2. Expressing a view on specific legislation +
3. A call to action

Advocacy or Lobbying?

- Sending a mass email to a listserv asking subscribers to contact their legislators about co-sponsoring a bill that protects low-income folks from evictions
- Organizing an educational public forum for local politicians to debate and share their views on transportation issues
- Speaking with a legislator about how the farmers market incentives program has impacted the community
- Calling or writing members of the legislature asking them to vote against the current version of a climate bill

When and how can you lobby?

- We all have a responsibility to lobby!
- Most of you will never hit the threshold that would jeopardize your non-profit's 501(c) 3 status or require you to register as lobbyist
- If your work is 100% state or federally funded, you can lobby on your own personal time
- If you work for government, you are legally able to lobby, but may want to check with your organization to understand your own organizational policies

Questions?

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