



**BOARD OF DIRECTOR'S 2022-2023 ADVOCACY TOOLKIT:
EFFECTIVE WAYS TO COMMUNICATE WITH LEGISLATORS ON
PUBLIC POLICY**



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Submitting a Letter

General Tips:

- **Craft your letter with a constructive lens.** For example, if a bill is addressing a problematic issue, note that the bill has a good intention but that the solution is not the right approach. Suggest alternatives when providing criticism.
- **Show Your Familiarity with the legislation.** The letter should reflect your familiarity with the legislation by indicating the bill's current status and your awareness of the legislator that serves on the committee in which the bill will be heard.
- **Be Brief.** Keep the letter to one page only by addressing the issue and how it affects the community's needs and/or statewide issues.
- **When writing a letter as a concerned citizen, be personal.** When writing the letter as a concerned citizen, mention in the body of the letter your interest and concern as a member of the community and a local Smart Start Partnership Board member. Write this letter on personal stationery.
- **When writing a letter as a board member, connect to Smart Start.** If writing the letter as a designated board member, mention your connection to Smart Start and utilize Smart Start or the Local Partnership's Board stationery, if available.

Letter Writing Considerations:

- **Consider timing.** A letter to a legislator is most effective when the legislation is filed or assigned to a committee, not when it is scheduled to be voted on or calendared.
- **Personalize your letter.** Personalized letters are more effective than mass produced or form letters. Form letters and response cards should be used only if you have no other alternative for expressing your opinions. Legislators pay more attention to personalized letters.
- **Provide contact information.** Include your contact information in the letter.
- **Address legislators correctly.** Utilize the chart below as an example on addressing legislators.
- **In the first paragraph:** The name of the House and/or Senate Bill should be stated in the first paragraph. If the applicable legislation has companion legislation, include both.
- **In the first paragraph:** State the letter's purpose.

Protocols for Addressing a Letter:

Letters should be addressed using the information provided below:

STATE		FEDERAL	
Governor The Honorable Roy Cooper North Carolina Office of the Governor 20301 Mail Service Center Raleigh, NC 27699-0301 Dear Governor Cooper:		President The Honorable Joe Biden The White House 1600 Pennsylvania Ave NW Washington, DC 20500 Dear Mr. President:	
NC Senate The Honorable (full name) (State) Senate (Office Address) Dear Senator	NC House of Representatives The Honorable (full name) (State) House of Representatives (Office Address) Dear Representative or (last name)	US Senate The Honorable (full name) United States Senate Washington, DC 20510 Dear Senator (last name):	US House of Representatives The Honorable (full name) United States House of Representatives Washington, DC 20515 Dear Congressman or Congresswoman (or Representative) (last name):

Current address information can be found at:

- Members of state legislature at NC General Assembly website at www.ncleg.net
- Members of Congress and NC Congressional Delegation at [Members of the U.S. Congress](http://Members.of.the.U.S.Congress) | Congress.gov | [Library of Congress](http://Library.of.Congress)

Letter Template for Writing to a Legislator

(Month) (Day) (Year)

The Honorable (First name) (Last name)
(Room Number), Legislative Building or Legislative Office Building
Raleigh, NC (Zip Code)

RE: (state the topic or include the bill number, bill sponsor, and subject if you are writing to support or oppose a particular legislative bill)

Dear (Representative/Senator) (Last name): My name is (your first and last name) and I am (consumer/family member/ provider/advocate/community member/board member) who resides in your district.

State why you support or oppose the bill. Provide up to three points that support your position and state them clearly.

Tell a personal story. Tell your representative why the issue is important to you and how it affects you, your family member and your community. Tell a personal story and connect the story to who you are (Ex: I am a parent, I am a child care advocate, etc).

Tell your representative how you want them to vote on this issue and ask for a response.

Sincerely,

Sign your signature. Include your name, address, telephone number and email address.

Sending an Effective Email

- Members of the NC General Assembly will have email addresses ending in ncleg.gov. The addresses can be found next to each member's name on the NC General Assembly website at www.ncleg.gov
- Although Legislative Assistant's generally read and respond to the member's email when the legislator is unavailable to open in a timely manner, it is still recommended to carbon copy the legislator's Legislative Assistant on the email. This information is located on the NC General Assembly website also for each member. See an example below:

Senate President Pro Tempore

Republican - District 30

[Caswell](#), [Rockingham](#), [Stokes](#), [Surry](#)

Mailing Address:

16 West Jones Street, Rm. 2007
Raleigh, NC 27601

Terms in Senate:

11 (0 in House)

Office Phone:

[\(919\) 733-5708](tel:(919)733-5708)

Member's Email:

Phil.Berger@ncleg.gov

Member's email address

Legislative Assistant:

[Robin Braswell](#)

Member's Legislative Assistant

Effective Email and Email Script Tips

- **State who you are.** Include your name and address at the top of the email so the state legislator can determine you live in their district.
- **Be brief.** Let the legislator know right away why you are sending the email. For example, why this issue is important to you.
- **Explicitly demonstrate your position.** Be explicit about whether you support or oppose the legislation.
- **Be constructive.** Do not criticize the legislator if they sponsored or cosponsored the bill. The purpose of the email is to state your position, tell your story, and educate the member by providing further insight or another point of view for consideration.
- **Avoid attachments.** If possible, do not send an attachment. Instead offer to provide additional information.
- **Avoid copying excess individuals on your e-mail.** Do not copy everyone on the email, just the Legislative Assistant. If everyone on a committee is cc'd, then the members may not all respond but simply refer.
- **Be selective about which issues and legislation you e-mail about.** Constituents who send email too frequently on many issues may be ignored. It is important to be selective.
- **Consider when you send.** Members should be contacted when the legislation is filed and/or assigned to a committee, not after the vote or when the bill is scheduled to be heard on the floor.

Email Script:

Dear Senator:

My name is [NAME] and I live in your district. I am writing to ask that you support an appropriation in the amount of [MONETARY AMOUNT] for the Smart Start Network.

I am writing as my family and friends have benefitted from many services provided by Smart Start over the years. I am a strong supporter as I have seen firsthand the benefits provided to children, families, teachers, and providers over the years. Since its inception in 1993, Smart Start has continued to have successful outcomes in the areas of early learning, child care, and family support.

As my legislator, I hope you understand the value of early childhood education and the many challenges facing the early care and education workforce.

Thank you for serving our state, and please contact me if more information is needed on the many benefits Smart Start provides to NC's children.

Regards,

NAME

Making a Telephone Call to a State Legislator to Support Legislation

Sample Script for a Smart Start Funding Increase:

Good morning/afternoon,

My name is [NAME], and I am a constituent in your district. I am a [state your profession] and also a member of the Smart Start Board of Directors representing [county(ies)]. I am calling to ask you to support a funding increase or appropriation of [MONETARY AMOUNT] for Smart Start.

Established in 1993, Smart Start will be celebrating its 30th anniversary in 2023.

I urge you to consider the hard times children and families, as well as child care teachers and providers, faced during COVID. Smart Start continues to provide services to support all children through health and developmental screening, early learning education opportunities, high quality child care, and family support. Most importantly, what makes Smart Start so unique is that it is not a “one size fits all” initiative but allows each local Smart Start partnership to meet its community’s needs.

Please vote “Yes” to support [Name of Smart Start initiative or bill that needs support] to help increase Smart Start funding.

Thank you for your time and hard work, [Representative’s/Senator’s name].

Sample Script for Opposition or Support of Legislation:

Note- Senate Bill 457, Healthy Families & Workplaces/Paid Sick Days will be used in this example

Hello, [Representative’s name]! I’m a constituent from [state location that you’re from]. I want to take a moment of your time to express my support regarding [bill name/issue]. Please know that I represent the people of [community].

I urge you to support [Bill]. By supporting this bill, you would be helping families to take off time from work to provide care for their sick children, thus reducing the child’s recovery time and further preventing the spread of illness within their child care environment.

Overall, Senate Bill 457 will allow families to remain healthier and more productive which will help the state’s economy. I hope we can all count on your support for this legislation.

Thank you for your time.

Mailing a Post Card or Thank you Note

- A post card may be mailed to a Congressional Representative or Senator, as well as state legislators to support or oppose legislation.
- A postcard may be mailed to members of your personal business and professional organizations, county elected officials, family, and friends to urge them to contact their designated member of the NC Congressional Delegation or NC state legislator to support or oppose a bill. Include a link in your post to help look up the member's mailing and telephone number. See sample below:



Dear Senator _____,

I'm writing to thank you for supporting the \$10 million appropriation in unrestricted funding for Smart Start during the last legislative session. This funding will allow 75 Smart Start Partnerships to continue to have an impact on the many children, families, teachers and providers across the state.

This legislative session provides yet another opportunity to increase Smart Start funding, which has continuously declined since its inception in 1993.

I hope we can count on your support.

Traveling to NC State Capitol or Visiting your State Legislator at their District Office.

Key Pointers and Reminders:

- **Be mindful of NC General Assembly schedule.** The Senate and the House of Representatives meet in their respective chambers on Monday evenings and during the day on **Tuesday-Thursday**. They are usually in their home districts on Friday.
- **Make an appointment in advance and identify your purpose.** Make an appointment in advance and identify yourself and the meeting's purpose when scheduling the meeting. *Note: If visiting a member of the NC Congressional Delegation, the meeting may be with the member's Chief of State or Legislator's Director/Assistant.*
- **Be aware of the position your legislator has taken.** Ensure you are aware of the position the legislator may have taken. *Note: NCPC's Public Policy Director can help you research your legislator's voting record and position on various issues.*
- **Do your research.** Ensure you have enough background information on the issue for discussion. You do not have to be a subject matter expert. Anticipate any questions your legislator may ask. *Note: This is a good opportunity to provide the member with a copy of a one-pager on the subject provided by NCPC. Write down any outstanding questions and advise the member you will follow up. Forward the questions to NCPC's Public Policy Director for further assistance after the meeting, if needed.*
- **Be mindful of time constraints and limitations.** Legislators will likely only be able to meet for 20 minutes or less. Additionally, not all legislators will be as familiar with the issue as you. For example, new legislators may not know Smart Start provides health and developmental screenings for children.
- **Connect to your community.** Frame your message and position in terms of its local effect, so the legislator is aware of what impact their vote will have on children, families, providers, and businesses within their local community/district.
- **Follow-up.** Follow up to provide any outstanding information requested during the meeting. Send a thank you note or post card reiterating your position. (see sample postcard on previous page)

Who to Know Inside the NC General and NC Congressional Delegation

Who to Know: NC General Assembly

Chairs and Membership of the following Committees:

- Senate Appropriations
- Senate Appropriation on Health and Human Services
- House Appropriations
- House Appropriation on Health and Human Services
- Note: As the session progresses, Senate and House Appropriations usually meet jointly.
- Joint Legislative Oversight Committee on Health and Human Services only meets during interim when NC General Assembly is not in session

Senate Leadership: [Leadership - North Carolina General Assembly \(ncleg.gov\)](https://www.ncleg.gov/Leadership)

House Leadership: [Leadership - North Carolina General Assembly \(ncleg.gov\)](https://www.ncleg.gov/Leadership)

NC Early Childhood Caucus	
NC Senate Chairs	NC House of Representative Chairs
Senator Jim Burgin Jim.Burgin@ncleg.gov	Representative Ashton Clemmons Ashton.Clemmons@ncleg.gov
Senator Jay Chaudhuri Jay.Chaudhuri@ncleg.gov	Representative David Willis David.Willis@ncleg.gov

Who to Know: NC Congressional Delegation

US Congress - Senate	
US Senator Thom Tillis	Statewide
US Senator-elect Ted Budd	Statewide
US Congress - House of Representatives	
Donald Davis	District 1
Deborah Ross	District 2
Gregory Murphy	District 3
Valerie Foushee	District 4
Virginia Foxx	District 5
Kathy Manning	District 6
David Rouzer	District 7
Dan Bishop	District 8
Richard Hudson	District 9
Patrick T. McHenry	District 10
Chuck Edwards	District 11
Alma Adams	District 12
Wiley Nichol	District 13
Jeff Jackson	District 14

Note: NC also picked up an additional Congressional seat during the 2022 midterm election (District 14). [nc-district-map-08.22-r2-web \(unc.edu\)](https://www.unc.edu/news/2022/08/22/nc-district-map-08.22-r2-web)

Effective Ways to Communicate and Collaborate with Others Around Public Policy Initiatives

While working with state legislators is key to a successful legislative gain and a public policy win, one of the avenues to pursue an effective campaign is by collaborating with others who have a similar interest and by educating the public through the media.

Some strategies may include:

- **Organizing a letter writing campaign on key issues.** First, begin by educating members of your business and professional organizations, faith-based community (church, synagogue, etc.), civic groups, family and friends. Next, encourage your network to send correspondence to their state or federal legislators on legislative issues. Third, offer to write a letter for them.
- **Encouraging others to voice support.** Encourage members of your network to visit their state legislators to voice their support for additional Smart Start funding and other early childhood supports to help children, families, teachers, and providers.
- **Writing an op-ed.** Write and send out an op-ed letter to your local newspaper.
- **Hosting an education forum.** Host an education forum in your district or region by collaborating with Smart Start Local Partnerships to invite state legislators, providers, families, and others to discuss mutual issues of concern regarding early childhood support. These areas of support may include but are not limited to early learning, child care, and family support.
- **Contacting your municipality and county-elected officials.** Discuss the community needs within your area with your municipality and county-elected officials. Encourage them to contact the state legislature. *(Note: While municipalities, do not address child care issue, land use planning is under their purview. Perhaps you know someone who wants to build a child care center. The NC Association of County Commissioners provide a directory of local government officials on their website at www.ncacc.org on the Contacts and Partner's Page.)*
- **Reaching out to your local Chamber of Commerce.** Find out if children and families are a part of your Chamber of Commerce agenda. Educate your local Chamber on the correlation between quality child care and family support, the business community, and the economy. *(Note: To find your County Chamber of Commerce, go to www.nchamber.com).*

Smart Start can grow stronger through strong community relationships and through strategic partnerships. By building relationships in your community, Smart Start can gain support, exposure, and inform others about early childhood. This support can lead to greater public and private investments to help ensure each child in the state can thrive.

Smart Start Network Talking Points:

General Talking Points

Smart Start is a Network of 75 nonprofit partnerships serving all 100 North Carolina counties. The Network is led by The North Carolina Partnership for Children (NCPC), which is responsible for the development of the state's comprehensive, long-range strategic plan for early childhood and the provision, through public and private means, of high-quality early childhood education and development services for children and families.

Designed as a public-private system for governance and funding, Smart Start leverages public dollars to increase private investments, and vice versa. As the state's economy continues to grow and attract more business, this foundational collaboration between the public and private sectors in early childhood is poised to grow.

NCPC also ensures fiscal and programmatic accountability for the statewide Network for responsible, efficient, and effective use of state dollars to create better outcomes for children and families. Additionally, NCPC provides Local Partnerships with evidence on program outcomes to support informed budget choices that produce results. In addition, continuous fiscal and quality monitoring ensures effectiveness and promotes innovation. As a state family services provider, NCPC implements investments in child and family services to help ensure each child in each community can thrive.

NCPC supports include, but are not limited to, supporting centralized accounting, guiding partnerships in program selection, providing county-level measures of child well-being and other data to inform decision-making, leading early childhood efforts across the state, and providing shared services to the Smart Start Network in regard to fundraising, outreach, learning and evaluation, policy, human resources, information and technology services, and programmatic support.

Smart Start Local Partnerships work across the state to raise the quality of early care and education, strengthen families, improve child health and development, and support early literacy.

Smart Start Network (distributes or invests) state public and private dollars to ensure their communities have access to a range of evidence-based and evidence informed solutions. Each Local Partnership has the flexibility to determine how to improve the health, well-being, and development of their community based on local needs and assets.

Local Partnerships support children and families using a combination of state, federal, local, and private funds to provide comprehensive services and programs that support and strengthen early development.

Additionally, Smart Start brings communities together to coordinate services and address gaps in supporting children, including parents, early learning and health professionals, educators, business leaders, and elected officials collaborating with the Smart Start Network. Each local partnership serves as convenor of those caring for young children and a champion coordinated service delivery and systems change.

Smart Start provides state-wide implementation support to the early childhood system and serves a key role in funding (supplementing, not supplanting) and administering other state, federal, and local programs such as NC Pre-K, child care subsidy, and Head Start. Smart Start also serves as one of the largest implementing systems for home-visiting and parenting education and community resilience by hosting the NC Home Visiting & Parenting Education System, and both hosting and administering the NC Healthy & Resilient Communities Initiative.

The Network also provides critical infrastructure support across the state in providing technical assistance to early childhood educators, referring families to needed services, and in lifting up the early childhood workforce.

Smart Start Local Partnerships and NCPC work together to bring state-wide demonstration projects through statewide collaboration and strategic initiatives . These include the creation of the Family Connects-Smart Start Pilots in eight rural communities; the Family Engagement and Leadership Initiative which lifts up family voice across 14 local partnerships; the establishment of the NC Healthy and Resilient Communities Initiative; the launch of the NC Home Visiting and Parenting Education System, and child care health consultants (CCHCs) expansion across the state.

By building a stronger, more comprehensive system of resources as well as a stronger, more complete and flexible infrastructure in which to support children, the Smart Start Network is better able to create long-term change across the state.

Talking Points: Smart Start as an Administrator and Funder

Smart Start is a Network of 75 nonprofit partnerships serving all 100 North Carolina counties. The Network is led by The North Carolina Partnership for Children (NCPC), which is responsible for the development of the state's comprehensive, long-range strategic plan for early childhood and the provision, through public and private means, of high-quality early childhood education and development services for children and families.

Designed as a public-private system for governance and funding, Smart Start leverages public dollars to increase private investments, and vice versa. As the state's economy continues to grow and attract more business, this foundational collaboration between the public and private sectors in early childhood is poised to grow.

NCPC also ensures fiscal and programmatic accountability for the statewide Network for responsible, efficient, and effective use of state dollars to create better outcomes for children and families. Additionally, NCPC provides Local Partnerships with evidence on program outcomes to support informed budget choices that produce results. In addition, continuous fiscal and quality monitoring ensures effectiveness and promotes innovation. As a state family services provider, NCPC implements investments in child and family services to help ensure each child in each community can thrive.

NCPC supports include, but are not limited to, supporting centralized accounting, guiding partnerships in program selection, providing county-level measures of child well-being and other data to inform decision-making, leading early childhood efforts across the state, and providing shared services to the Smart Start Network in regard to fundraising, outreach, learning and evaluation, policy, human resources, information and technology services, and programmatic support. NCPC funds these supports ensuring Smart Start Local Partnerships are supported and able to implement quality investments for children and families. By investing in Local Partnerships, NCPC funds a powerful Network that can create collective impact across the state.

Smart Start Local Partnerships work across the state to raise the quality of early care and education, strengthen families, improve child health and development, and support early literacy. Partnerships can do so through data-informed investments as NCPC funds the collection of state-level data to provide insight on the conditions of parents and children across the state.

Smart Start Network (distributes or invests) state public and private dollars to ensure their communities have access to a range of evidence-based and evidence informed solutions. Each Local Partnership has the flexibility to determine how to improve the health, well-being, and development of their community based on local needs and assets.

Local Partnerships support children and families using a combination of state, federal, local, and private funds to provide comprehensive services and programs that support and strengthen early development.

Smart Start provides state-wide implementation support to the early childhood system and serves a key role in funding (supplementing, not supplanting) and administering other state, federal, and local programs such as NC Pre-K, child care subsidy, and Head Start. In particular, Local Partnerships play a key role in supporting the local infrastructure of NC Pre-K with financial resources and training.

The Network also serves as one of the largest implementing systems for home-visiting and parenting education and technical assistance to early childhood professionals. The Network also plays a critical role in expanding access to child care health consultants (CCHCs) across

the state, supporting the health and well-being of young children. Likewise, Local Partnerships implement needed programs across the state such as the Dolly Parton Imagination Library to ensure children are developmentally ready for kindergarten.

The funds provided to Smart Start Network allow Local Partnerships to create change in each community, ensuring each child has the resources they need to thrive. Funding Smart Start ensures Local Partnerships can administer needed programmatic and strategic supports to better outcomes for children and families.

By building a stronger, more comprehensive system of resources as well as a stronger, more complete and flexible infrastructure in which to support children, the Smart Start Network is better able to create long-term change across the state.

Talking Points: Smart Start as a System-Builder and Conveyor

Smart Start is a Network of 75 nonprofit partnerships serving all 100 North Carolina counties. The Network is led by The North Carolina Partnership for Children (NCPC), which is responsible for the development of the state's comprehensive, long-range strategic plan for early childhood and the provision, through public and private means, of high-quality early childhood education and development services for children and families. NCPC also ensures fiscal and programmatic accountability for the statewide Network for responsible, efficient, and effective use of state dollars to create better outcomes for children and families.

NCPC collects state-level data, supporting Smart Start Local Partnerships in serving communities, and complementing community-level data collected from Local Partnerships. This state, county, and community-level data is used to coordinate decisions and create collective impact for children and families across the state.

Smart Start Network supports include, but are not limited to, coordinating a statewide delivery system and infrastructure to drive change across the state; convening early childhood professionals to move the needle forward on early childhood priorities such as child care, early education, health, and family support; creating early childhood systems-change, especially in regard to racial equity, raising the quality of education, and in supporting early childhood professionals.

Smart Start Local Partnerships work across the state to raise the quality of early care and education, strengthen families, improve child health and development, and support early literacy. Local Partnerships are also focused on improving alignment of services designed for children and their families, working to ensure comprehensive support in various settings.

Additionally, Smart Start brings communities together to coordinate services and address gaps in supporting children, including parents, early learning and health professionals,

educators, business leaders, and elected officials collaborating with the Smart Start Network. Each local partnership serves as convenor of those caring for young children and a champion coordinated service delivery and systems change.

This coordinated services approach includes providing services directly to families and working with partners to promote systems change so that policies and practices help services meet families more effectively and efficiently.

The Network also provides critical infrastructure support across the state in providing technical assistance to early childhood educators, referring families to needed services, and in lifting up the early childhood workforce.

Smart Start Local Partnerships and NCPC work together to bring state-wide demonstration projects through statewide collaboration and strategic initiatives. These include the creation of the Family Connects-Smart Start Pilots in eight rural communities; the Family Engagement and Leadership Initiative which lifts up family voice across 14 local partnerships; the establishment of the NC Healthy and Resilient Communities Initiative; the launch of the NC Home Visiting and Parenting Education System, and child care health consultants (CCHCs) expansion across the state.

By building a stronger, more comprehensive system of resources as well as a stronger, more complete and flexible infrastructure in which to support children, the Smart Start Network is better able to create long-term change across the state, creating collect impact statewide for children and families.