

How to Include Self-Advocate Voices and Make an Impactful One- Pager

Adrian Forsythe

NDSC Policy and Advocacy
Assistant



Meet Adrian Forsythe

Education:

- George Mason University LIFE program with concentrations in Theater and Communication.

Work

- TerpsExceed at University of Maryland
- Down Syndrome Network of Montgomery County (DSNMC) Advocacy and Engagement Assistant,
- NDSC Policy and Advocacy Assistant

Other:

- Active Self-Advocate and Community Leader.



Advocacy Highlights and Experiences



Serving on boards

ArtStream

Down Syndrome

Network of
Montgomery County
(DSNMC)

The Arc of Maryland –
currently



DSNMC Responsibilities

Lead the weekly Teen
Hangout program

Lead our Self-
Advocate Community
Network



Other

Co- lead Adult
Workgroup for the
Maryland Down
Syndrome Advocacy
Coalition (MDAC)

National Down
Syndrome Advocacy
Coalition (NDAC)



Advocacy in Action

- Again, I am with the Maryland Down Syndrome Advocacy Coalition (MDAC).
- We are talking to Maryland Governor Wes Moore about funding developmental disabilities services.

Why are self-advocate's voices important?



Individuals living with Down syndrome really know what we want and need.



We have lived experience to say what needs to change to make each of our unique lives more meaningful and impactful.



When there is a discussion that is affecting us, we must speak out and speak up.



The Power of Self-Advocates

Self-Advocates should be fully engaged in all aspects of advocacy. It is one of **THE MOST EFFECTIVE** way to get our voices heard.

Provide training opportunities for necessary tools and trainings so we can meaningfully participate in

- Public speaking workshops
- Participation in advocacy trainings, conferences, Hill Days
- Creating one pagers – all advocates you have a one-pager to take along
- Remember to create and include opportunities for those who use alternative communication.
- No need to reinvent the wheel. Use the resources and materials on the NDSC Website under Advocacy Training.

“A single voice can make a difference but together we can make a universal change.”



Tell Your Story: One-Pagers

Tell Your Personal Story

Your most powerful tool is your story!
Telling an elected official how something will impact your life is powerful.

- A one-page leave-behind can be used in many situations including:
 - In-person meetings
 - Requests for virtual meetings
 - Emails
- Be sure to update it regularly with new information and **new policy related asks.**



Tell Your Story: One-Pagers

Remember to always include:

- ❑ Contact information including your name, street address with your zip code (constituents have power), phone number, and email address.
- ❑ If you want to include your Instagram, Twitter or other social media that is optional.
 - Photo – action or otherwise
 - A few sentences about yourself (where you work, go to school, your interests).
 - The Ask and why you are asking – the ask is what you want the policymaker to do. How does this impact you, your friends, or someone you care for; what policy is it related to?
 - Always say thank you and tell them how they can contact you.
 - Always keep it to one-page. People are more likely to read it.

NDSC One-Pager Template for Meetings with Elected Officials

Anyone can and should use this template guide to creating their one-pager. You can find the template on the NDSC Website.

Access the template
here: https://ndsccenter.org/file_download/inline/a78baad1-7a23-4e39-87c2-bc897121372b

 NATIONAL DOWN SYNDROME CONGRESS	Sample Leave Behind Biography Template
Dear Representative/Senator Opening My name is _____ and I am from [NAME OF HOMETOWN] _____ Introduction of yourself and a few sentences about yourself. You might include: • Age • Where you work or go to school • Hobbies • Interests • Goals _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ The Ask I am asking you to support/oppose XXXX and why. _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ Always say thank you! Your name and contact information including: • Address • Phone • Email _____ _____ _____ TIP! Always include at least one photo of yourself!	



What is a Policy Related Ask?

An ask is when you request that an elected official, committee member, or other leader support a bill or not support a bill, motion, or idea.

There is an example of a policy ask in my one-pager that I will share with you next.

Adrian Forsythe's One-Pager leave behind

Read My One-Pager:

https://ndsccenter.org/file_download/inline/e298bd0d-3242-4805-9b3c-04f4405b7339

Read Other Advocates One-Pagers:

<https://ndsccenter.org/policy/advocacy-training-resources/ndsc-advocacy-resource-page.html>



Adrian Forsythe-Korzeniewicz One-Pager

Dear [Senator or Representative Name],

My name is Adrian Forsythe-Korzeniewicz. I am your constituent and a person with Down syndrome.

My disability has not stopped me from achieving similar goals to those of my brother and friends. I graduated from the George Mason University LIFE Program, where I studied theater and communications. I have always been passionate about advocating for people with Down syndrome, ensuring that we have a seat at the table, and showing how much we can achieve. That is why I am proud to work as the Policy and Advocacy Assistant at the National Down Syndrome Congress, as the Advocacy and Engagement Assistant at the Down Syndrome Network of Montgomery County, and creating podcasts for the University of Maryland's inclusive post-secondary education program, TerpsEXCEED.



While I love all three of my jobs, there is a major barrier I and countless other people with disabilities experience: if I have more than \$2,000 in my bank account, I could lose services that help me build job skills, travel independently, and work toward future goals like getting married or raising a family.

That means, I can't be paid too much, I can't get a raise even if I deserve one, and my family and I need to constantly worry about not being over \$2,000! How can I show the world how much people with Down syndrome can achieve when we are stopped by these limits?

I am asking you to cosponsor the **SSI Savings Penalty Elimination Act (S. 1234/H.R. 2540)**. The bill raises the SSI asset limit to \$10,000 for an individual and \$20,000 for a married couple, which would eliminate the SSI Marriage Penalty. The bill would also adjust the asset limits for inflation in the future.

People with disabilities shouldn't have to decide between their services and saving for their futures.

Thank you for your consideration. I hope you will cosponsor the SSI Savings Penalty Elimination Act.

Your Constituent,
Adrian Forsythe-Korzeniewicz

Phone: xxx-xxx-xxxx

Email:

IG:

Home Address:

City, State, Zip Code

Preparing to Share Your Story in a Meeting

1. Know your "why" — why is this issue important to you?
2. Keep it short and personal
3. Practice with friends or family!



Before the Meeting

- Learn your elected official's name and position
- Know the bill or topic you're talking about
- **Bring a one-pager or leave behind info**





During the Meeting

- Introduce yourself confidently
- Share your story in 1-3 minutes
- Ask for something particular (example: co-sponsor a bill)
- Be polite, smile, and thank them
- Be prepared to be flexible

After the Meeting

- Send a thank you note or email
- Follow up with additional information if needed
- Stay connected with their office
- Post on social media about your experience and what you are advocating for!
- Remember to ask permission to post social media



Adrian's Closing Advocacy Tips

- Be yourself — Be your best self.
- Bring a friend or support person because together we can make a difference
- It's okay to be nervous — just speak from your heart!

Remember:

**“It is not about what we can't do; but what we
can do when given the opportunity.”**

nothing about us without us!

ADVOCACY



When we advocate, we show that people with different abilities have good lives & make the world a better place. Remember, every person's advocacy will be different, but all of us can make a difference.

How to Tell Your Story So It Leads to Action

**Stephanie Meredith, Ph.D.
Parent Advocate, GA**

