# ADVOCACY TOOLKIT

## Unite. Learn. Empower. Act. Transform.

Advocacy is about using your voice to ensure that your community has what it needs to thrive. This handbook provides the tools and information to reach out to decision-makers and drive meaningful change in health equity, insurance access, and fair pricing.

Advocacy begins with awareness. To build a healthier community, we must learn, connect, and act. Whether for yourself, your family, or others facing barriers, knowledge is power.

**graahi.org/advocacy**

# Build a Justice Mindset

**Get Educated**: Learn how health, housing, education, and economic policies shape daily life. Understand social drivers of health: racism, poverty, and environmental injustice. Follow laws, budgets, and policy decisions at every level.

**Empower Others:** Start with: "How can I support you?" Listen first, collaborate, and amplify voices instead of speaking for others. Share resources with respect for lived experience.

**Connect & Build Coalitions:** Advocacy is stronger together; partner with nonprofits, schools, churches, clinics, and grassroots groups. Align around shared goals in health equity and justice.

**Honor Faith, Youth & Elders:** Black and Latino churches have long led justice movements; engage faith leaders in advocacy. Create intergenerational spaces where wisdom and energy meet.

**Know the Law:** Understand what is legal, ethical, and actionable in your advocacy. Know your rights, and help others know theirs.

# Why We Advocate: The Data on Health Equity

In Michigan, disparities in health outcomes remain a critical challenge. Knowing the numbers helps us communicate the urgency to our legislators.

| Health Metric | Group with Highest Disparity | Statistical Impact |
|---|---|---|
| Infant Mortality | Black/African American | Black infants are 2.8x more likely to die before their first birthday than White infants in MI. |
| Life Expectancy | Low-income / Minority zip codes | There is a gap of up to 12 years in life expectancy between neighboring zip codes in Kent County. |
| Prescription Access | Uninsured / Minority Adults | 1 in 4 Black adults in Michigan report skipping medication due to high costs compared to 1 in 10 White adults. |

# Take Action: Tools for Advocacy

## Direct & Community Advocacy
- Write, call, or meet with elected officials.
- Testify at hearings or submit public comments.
- Attend local forums, town halls, or neighborhood meetings.
- Partner with local orgs to host drives, resource fairs, or events.

## Voting & Civic Engagement
- Learn about candidates at every level, from the school board to Congress.
- Vote in every election; local leaders often have the biggest daily impact.
- Support candidates aligned with health equity and justice.
- Help others register, find polling places, or get rides to vote.
- Hold leaders accountable between elections.

## Economic Advocacy
- Vote with your wallet, shop, bank, and invest in alignment with your values.
- Support local and minority-owned businesses to strengthen community wealth.
- Donate with intention, time, funds, or unused resources (vehicles, prescription glasses, supplies).
- Reuse, recycle, and repurpose to reduce waste and reliance on harmful corporate practices.
- Encourage schools, churches, and employers to invest in community-positive initiatives.

## Storytelling & Digital Action
- Share your story to humanize issues through writing, speaking, or visuals.
- Use social media, podcasts, or livestreams to educate and mobilize.
- Protect confidentiality, seek consent, and uplift dignity.

## Everyday Advocacy
- Speak up when practices cause harm.
- Offer kindness, support, and solidarity.
- Consistent small actions build lasting change.

*For a complete list of legislators, election dates, and scripts, visit us at:* **graahi.org/advocacy**

# Sample Advocacy Scripts & Letters

Use these templates to reach out. Personalizing these with your own story makes them significantly more effective.

**Sample 1:  Phone Script (Medicaid/Medicare Support)**
"Hello, my name is [Your Name] and I am a constituent from [Your City]. I am calling to urge [Legislator Name] to protect and expand funding for Medicaid and Medicare. These programs are lifelines for our elders and underserved families. We need your commitment to ensure no Michigan resident is denied care due to their income. Can I count on the Senator/Representative to vote against any cuts to these programs? Thank you for your time."

**Sample 2:  Email Template (Low-Cost Prescriptions)**
Subject: Urgent: Support for Fair Prescription Pricing
"Dear [Legislator Name],
As a resident of [City], I am writing to ask for your support of legislation that addresses the skyrocketing costs of life-saving prescriptions. Many in our community must choose between food and medicine. I urge you to support transparency in drug pricing and a cap on out-of-pocket costs for essential medications like insulin and asthma inhalers. Our community's health should not be a secondary concern to corporate profits.
Sincerely, [Your Name]"

**Sample 3:  Postcard Script (Health Equity)**
"Dear [Legislator Name],
Health equity means everyone has a fair chance to be healthy. In Michigan, Black and Latino families still face systemic barriers to quality care. I am asking you to prioritize health equity in the next budget by funding community health workers and local clinics in underserved areas. Our voices matter!
Best, [Your Name/Address]"

**Sample 4:  Social Media Message/Tag**
"@[LegislatorHandle] Healthy communities start with fair access! Please support the expansion of [Specific Bill or Program] to ensure all Michiganders have health insurance they can actually afford. #HealthEquity #GRAAHI #StrongerTogether"

# Quick Start Checklist

- ☐ **Contact one elected official about an issue you care about.**
- ☐ **Register to vote and help someone else do the same.**
- ☐ **Support a local or minority-owned business.**
- ☐ **Donate unused items or funds to a community cause.**
- ☐ **Join a GRAAHI listening session or advocacy training.**
- ☐ **Ask someone: "How can I support you today?"**
- ☐ **Rest and recharge; sustainable advocacy requires care.**