



AIDSWatchSM

KNOW BEFORE YOU GO

Given the hostility that exists within the current political climate towards transgender and non-binary individuals, immigrants, Black and Brown communities, and other groups to which AIDSWatch attendees belong, we advise individuals to take precautions for their safety and well-being while advocating on Capitol Hill. Here are some things to know to can help ensure your safety while advocating on Capitol Hill:

Consider Your Environment

Unfortunately, given the increased prevalence of openly anti-LGBTQ+ and racist rhetoric and behavior in politics over the last year, we cannot guarantee that all Congressional offices and public areas on Capitol Hill will be safe spaces for AIDSWatch attendees. It is more important than ever that AIDSWatch attendees from marginalized communities – and transgender and immigrant attendees in particular – research the views and public statements of any member of Congress they are scheduled to meet with before the AIDSWatch advocacy day.

If the past statements of any member of Congress listed on your advocacy day schedule are openly hostile to a community to which you or those you care about belong, we recommend reaching out to your State Coordinator or to AIDS United staff to determine a course of action moving forward with which you are comfortable. Effective advocacy can take many forms, and if you feel like meeting with a particular Congressional office is a potential threat to your safety or emotional well-being, opting out of a meeting with that office or establishing ground rules for when to remove yourself from a harmful encounter can be discussed.

Engaging with Difficult Congressional Offices

Some of the offices that you meet with during the AIDSWatch advocacy day may be dismissive, rude, or even openly hostile. It is impossible to fully predict which Congressional offices will be receptive to your advocacy and which ones will not, but using the following strategies can help build relationships and diffuse tense situations

- Focus on your story, not their reaction: Even when sharing deeply personal stories, try not to get emotionally invested in a staffer or member of Congress's response to your advocacy. An office showing a lack of interest or hostility is not a reflection of you or your advocacy, but that office's own biases and priorities.
- When in doubt, stick to the issues: Your policy brief is there to help guide your advocacy. If you find yourself feeling unsure of how to proceed or stuck with a particular office, refer back to your brief.
- Lean on your State Coordinator: Each state delegation will have at least one state coordinator who helps guide you around the Hill and leads Congressional meetings. Talk with them ahead of time to make a plan for what to do if you feel uncomfortable or unsafe during a meeting.

Engaging with Difficult Congressional Offices (cont.)

- Come prepared: Watch this [AIDSWatch training video](#) on the art of meeting with congressional offices (This section starts at the 20:46 mark) and read over this [resource on how to prepare for Hill meetings](#).
- Engaging in good faith vs. walking away: If a meeting ever starts to feel hostile or discriminatory, participants should feel empowered to leave.

We also encourage all AIDSWatch participants to stay with the other members of their state delegation as much as possible. Your safety is our top priority and Capitol Hill can be an easy place to get lost. Staying with your state delegation for the duration of the advocacy day is the simplest way to ensure your personal safety and reach all of your meetings on time.

Logistical Considerations

- Capitol Building Security: Know what you can and cannot bring into the buildings (e.g., no large bags, certain electronics). A list of prohibited items can be found here: www.visitthecapitol.gov/visit/know-before-you-go/prohibited-items
- Emergency Contacts: Please find contact information for a few partners below, who participants can contact if they feel unsafe.
 - Soapbox Consulting Help Line – 202-362-5910
 - National Lawyers Guild DC Legal Support Hotline: 202-850-0010
- Single-Occupancy Restrooms are available to the public in the following locations:
 - Cannon House Office Building: 2nd Floor, near 267
 - Dirksen Senate Office Building: Ground Floor, near SDG85; 1st Floor, SD197; 1st Floor, near SD160; 1st Floor, near SD156
 - Longworth House Office Building: Basement, near B307
 - O'Neill House Office Building: Sub-basement, near SB320
 - Russell Senate Office Building: 2nd Floor, near SR287; 3rd Floor, near SR381; 4th Floor, near SR481
 - U.S. Capitol Visitor Center: CVC125; CVC127; CVC131; CVC142; CVC146; CVC148; CVC234; CVC236; CVC254; CVC255

Social Media & Public Visibility

- Be Mindful of Social Media Posts: While public visibility is key to advocacy, we ask that you obtain consent from other advocates included in any photos taken at AIDSWatch prior to posting them online. We also caution against tagging individuals in posts and encourage attendees to use #AIDSWatch or tag @aidsunited instead.
- AIDSWatch will include photography & other documentation: Photography, filming, and/or recordings will occur at this event. By attending AIDSWatch, you consent and authorize photography, film, livestream, and recording for distribution from this event, which may be used to promote the event and the work of its planning partners on our websites, public facing channels, and in other development/marketing materials. AIDSWatch will not personally identify you in these photographs.
- Secure Personal Information: Check your privacy settings and avoid oversharing personal information online.