

# Fulfilling our mission as advocates for children

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If you belong to PTA, I know you believe as I do that PTA members can and must participate in public policy making. We belong to PTA because it supports us in advocacy and lobbying efforts to mold local, state and national programs, policies, and priorities on behalf of children, schools, and communities.

What does the Massachusetts VP of Legislation do? What can PTA members do?

As VP of Legislation for Massachusetts PTA my role is to raise awareness of PTA issues and positions among PTA members, policy makers and the public. At times, I am a spokesperson on national and Massachusetts PTA priority issues, giving testimony at hearings and joining policy making committees on behalf of the PTA.

I keep informed on legislative activities at the state and national level, I attend national meetings and conferences, and I participate in national legislative and policy conference calls. Then I send out the e-newsletter Massachusetts PTA Takes Action to keep you informed about the news and resources you need to play a leadership role in making children a high priority in your community and at the state and national levels.

I also send out Action Alerts. These are usually urgent appeals for action at critical times in the legislation and budget-making process. I hope you will write letters or make phone calls to state and national legislators, legislative committees, and news editors. Usually I can provide a draft, template or script to make it easy for you. These Action Alerts are an important way to make the PTA voice count.

The real key to public advocacy is developing and maintaining relationships with policy makers throughout the year. I encourage you to build strong relationships with your policy makers at the local, state and federal level. Get to know your legislators and their staff. Write letters to the editor about PTA priority issues. Increase the visibility of the PTA and

promote PTA's advocacy agenda among the public and policy makers.

Do you have a passion? I am most passionate about environmental health and safety, pollution prevention, health security, asthma and other chronic health conditions, and school indoor air quality issues.



**Ellie with Representative Koutoujian at Alliance for a Healthy Tomorrow Massachusetts State House Forum**

There are many other health promotion, education, nutrition, community safety and parent involvement activities that need your attention and involvement. Consider serving as the PTA liaison to or as a member of public policy committees and groups organized to promote the issues you care about.

Most important, think of yourself as a resource to your local PTA, to your legislators, their staff people, and other community policy makers. You are their eyes and ears at the local level. Let them know your personal, school and community concerns, interests and needs.

Also seek out local community partners and organizations such as the League of Women Voters, your district's Parent Advisory Committee for Special Education, Stand for Children, and other groups working to promote the interests of children and to enhance pride in the schools and community.

There is always plenty of room for new ideas! We are most powerful and effective when we work together.

I look forward to hearing from you. Please contact me at [vplegislation@masspta.org](mailto:vplegislation@masspta.org).

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