



## Role-Playing Scenarios: Meeting with Your Legislator

*Many students have never been part of a meeting with a legislator or their staffer. Meetings can serve as a great opportunity to educate lawmakers on audiology and audiology-related legislative and regulatory issues. Through this resource, the SAA's goal is to provide students with an interactive example of what these meetings might look like.*

*In this document, there are two scenarios that can be acted out at chapter meetings or a dedicated advocacy training event. Discussion questions are also included to encourage reflection on certain successes and shortcomings that occur during these scenarios.*

*If you or your chapter would like more information on putting together an advocacy training event or would like help and facilitation from the Student Academy of Audiology, please contact Rachael Sifuentes, SAA Operations Manager at [rsifuentes@audiology.org](mailto:rsifuentes@audiology.org).*

### **SCENARIO 1: Excited Emily (audiology student) goes to talk with the Honorable Darryl Dismissive, House Representative from Hawaii**

*Setting the scene: Representative Dismissive shows up about 15 minutes late for your meeting and has totally forgotten what this meeting was about. He calls his dog into the room and turns to Emily...*

DD: Hello! You must be Sarah. I got some information from you on the road situation just yesterday. Come on in and we can talk about those speed bumps.

EE: Good afternoon Representative Dismissive. I have heard about the possibility of those speed bumps going in on 2nd Avenue, it will certainly help slow traffic around that school zone. However, my name is Excited Emily and I am a Doctor of Audiology student and constituent. I came here today to meet with you about some hearing and balance health-care issues that are currently affecting audiologists here in Hawaii. Is this still a good time, or are you expecting Sarah here soon?

DD: Oh yes! Sorry about that. My meeting with Sarah is tomorrow. You look just like her! I'm sorry for the confusion. Come on in let's have a seat.

EE: Thank you. Just to start, are you familiar with the role that audiologists play in hearing and balance healthcare?

DD: Oh sure! My cousin is a speech-language pathologist. She works with children who have hearing aids, so yes, I know all about that.

EE: Great! I'm glad to hear that you are aware of the impact that hearing loss can have on language development in children and adults. It sounds like you also know that audiologists play an integral part in the rehabilitative process for those who have hearing loss and balance disorders. That is why I came to talk to you today. We are asking for your support

of a bill called the Hearing Aid Tax Credit Act *[hands over the issue-brief]* that would help improve access to hearing health-care, particularly hearing aids.

*[DD's dog barks and DD goes across the room to pick him up and put him on the couch.]*

DD: I haven't heard much about this. But we provide hearing aids free-of-cost to all children who are identified with hearing loss. I really don't see much of a need for this.

EE: The program has been very successful in helping children reach their full potential in overcoming hearing loss. Thank you for continuing to support that effort. However, hearing aids are not often covered for adults with hearing loss. Private insurers have started to provide some coverage, but Medicare does not pay anything towards hearing aids for adults. As you know, 17% of the total population in Hawaii are Medicare recipients, and that does not count those that are uninsured.

*[DD's phone dings and he brings out his phone to see the notification.]*

EE: This bill would provide a tax credit of \$500 every five years toward the purchase of a hearing aid and would greatly improve our patients' access to getting the help they need for their hearing loss.

DD: Mmhm. Okay. Well, this is something that I can get my staffer to look into a little more. How many people are we talking about here?

EE: The percentage of adults with hearing loss increases with age, as you could imagine. For those that are Medicare beneficiaries, the rate of hearing loss ranges from 30 to 50% of those older than 65.

DD: That's a lot of people and a lot of money. I'll get this off to my staffer and we'll take a look at it.

EE: Thank you. I appreciate you wanting to look into this more. Age-related hearing loss has been associated with other health-care concerns such as social isolation, depression and cognitive decline, Hearing loss certainly does not stand alone in the influences it has on people's lives. Can we count on you to support this bill?

DD: I'll have to see who the co-sponsors are on this and get my staffer to look into it a little more.

EE: Well, I'll be happy to email you some more information on the need for increased access to hearing health-care and some statistics on hearing loss as a public health concern.

DD: Great. You can also pass that along to my staffer. *[DD stands up, hands EE two business cards].*

EE: Representative Dismissive, thank you for your time today. Please feel free to contact me with any questions you may have. *[EE hands over her business card.]* I hope once you and your staffer look into this issue more, we can count on your support in the future.

DD: We'll keep you posted.

EE: I look forward to talking with you and your staffer again soon. It was so nice meeting you. Thank you again for your time.

Reflection Questions:

- What did Emily do well in repairing a few awkward situations at the beginning?
- Did Emily do a good job of educating Representative Dismissive on what audiology is? What could she have done better? Or was this the best she could do given Representative Dismissive's comment about already being familiar with audiology?
- What did Emily do well in getting Representative Dismissive to switch from talking about children to adults?
- What did Emily do well in reading Representative Dismissive in how he was ready to wrap up the meeting?
- What kinds of things did Emily have in order to be prepared for the meeting?
- What should Emily do to stay in contact with Representative Dismissive about the bill?

**SCENARIO 2: Unprepared Uma (audiology student) goes to talk with staffer, Mr. Ira Intrigued**

*Setting the stage: UU arrives on time for her appointment with II. She's shuffling papers to try to find the name of the staffer she's supposed to be meeting.*

UU: Umm...*[still shuffling papers]* I have a meeting with the staffer today...hold on let me find his name...

Receptionist: Which staffer? What is your name?

UU: Unprepared Uma, I'm an audiology student that came to talk with...

Receptionist: ...Yes, I see. You're meeting with Mr. Ira Intrigued; he is the staffer that deals in health-care issues for Representative Dismissive.

UU: Thank you. *[II comes out as UU shoves all of her papers into her bag.]*

II: Good afternoon. I'm Ira, Representative Dismissive's health-care staffer.

UU: Good afternoon. I'm Unprepared Uma *[shakes his hand]*. Nice to meet you.

*[II sits down at the table with UU. UU works to pull her papers back out of her bag. She frantically shuffles the papers to get them in order.]*

UU: I'm an audiology student at State University and I wanted to come and talk to you about a bill that would provide captioned telephones to hard of hearing and deaf people in Hawaii. This program could be really helpful to people who aren't able to communicate on the phone.

II: Well that sounds like a great program. Can you tell me a little more about how that might work? Do other states have a similar program?

UU: The phone displays captioning of what the person on the other end of the line is saying. I think they can amplify the sound coming through the handset too.

II: I'm sure that could be really helpful for those with hearing loss. What is the name of it? I think my grandmother really needs one of those.

UU: There are a few brands. I think one of them is Capti...Capti-Call? I can google it.

II: No, no. That's ok. I can look into it later. What is proposed to fund this initiative?

UU: Yeah, it might get pretty expensive. I think I saw that they were going to add an extra tax onto people's phone bills.

II: Okay. Well I'm not sure what that would look like or how much it would be. But it sounds like a great idea that we would likely support. What is the status on this bill? Does it have much support?

UU: I think the bill is in the House. It has a lot of sponsors.

II: Great. Is that on your issue brief here?

UU: I'm not sure.

II: That's ok. This sounds like a good bill.

UU: So we can count on your support?

II: Yes, pending a little research on who's involved, specifics on the phone and the costs that will be associated.

UU: Great. Well, thank you for your time. I appreciate your support on this. You can feel free to contact me with any questions you may have. *[Searches in her bag for a business card.]* I forgot my business card, but I can write down my email address for you.

II: That's ok. Here's my business card. You can email me so that I have your contact information.

UU: I'm sorry about that. I'll send you an email. Thank you again for your time.

*[UU & II shake hands]*

#### Reflection Questions:

- What did Uma do poorly at the beginning of the meeting? What could she have done differently?
- Did Uma appropriately identify her affiliation with audiology (e.g., student, university) and her status as a constituent of Representative Dismissive? How might this affect the ultimate outcome of the meeting?
- Did Uma do a good job of relaying the appropriate information to Ira? How could Uma have done a better job of satisfying Ira's need for more information despite not having it memorized or on-hand?
- What would be appropriate follow-up for this meeting to make up for Uma's many mistakes?