Advocating for Change Using Your Own Story

YOUTH MOVE MASSACHUSETTS

Do

- Practice your story aloud
- Stay grounded and take care of yourself
- Tailor your message for your audience
- Bring someone with you if you can

Don't

- Overshare beyond what feels safe
- Assume everyone will understand; explain simply
- Forget your goal; always bring it back to the change you want



Ways to Advocate

Speak at a Legislative Hearing
These are public meetings where lawmakers hear testimony on proposed bills. Prepare a short 2–3 minute statement. Stick to your experience and how the bill could help. Practice reading it out loud and time yourself.

Email or Call Your Elected Officials
Write a short message with your story and ask for their support. Include the bill name/number and why it matters to you personally.

Use Social Media
Share your experience and tag lawmakers or organizations. Post videos, graphics, or reels that raise awareness and drive action.

Join a Youth Advocacy Day or Campaign
Partner with local mental health, youth, or social justice organizations. Testify, march, or meet with legislators as part of a group.

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Know Your Purpose

- What are you trying to change?
- Who are you trying to reach?

Example:
"I want lawmakers to fund more school-based mental health services because I didn't have support when I needed it."

Start with the facts.

Set the scene. Share your story and background.

Explain the impact.

What happened?
How did it affect you?

Show the need for change.

What could've helped?
What do you wish had been different?

Balance Vulnerability with Empowerment	Add Facts to Strengthen Your Story	End With a Clear Call to Action
Share enough to connect, but protect your emotional well-being.	Include one or two powerful statistics to back up your experience.	Be direct about what you're asking for.
Show your resilience, how you've grown, or what you're doing now.	Source facts from trusted organizations.	"Please include youth with lived experience in decision-making."

More resources:

UNICEF Youth Advocacy Guide

MHL Young Adult Advocacy Toolkit

Youth-Led Advocacy Guide

PPAL
Parent/Professional Advocacy League, Inc.
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