

# Grassroots Advocacy 101

Helping charter schools get the support they deserve depends on strong community participation. Parents are the backbone of that movement. Every voice counts— and adding yours makes all the difference.

*So as a parent, what can you do?*

The term “grassroots” describes a distinctive “from the bottom up” approach to shaping public policy, launching a public affairs campaign, or drawing attention to an issue. The following is a brief overview of grassroots advocacy.

## **What is grassroots advocacy?**

Grassroots advocacy is a distinctive approach to public participation that engages everyday people— not policy or political professionals— in shaping public policy and perception, including policies that affect charter schools. The point of grassroots advocacy is to demonstrate to policy-makers that charter schools have deep support in the communities they represent. The focus of grassroots advocacy is not on how well you know a particular policy-maker or how much access you have, but rather on the quantity and quality of contact with the policy-maker.

## **Who is a grassroots advocate for charter schools?**

This may be obvious, but the answer is you and anyone else who has an interest in innovative public educational opportunities.

## **Where can I find more people like myself to become grassroots advocates for charter schools?**

In addition to taking action yourself, you can help advance policy change by encouraging others you know to take action as well, including:

- Your family and friends

- Your neighbors

- Organizations that you are involved with, including civic organizations or the school parent group

- Your children’s friends, teachers, coaches or classmate’s parents

- Other people in your social circle, such as your job, business and organizations in your community, or your place of worship

## **What else can I do as a grassroots advocate?**

You can be part of a vital statewide network that’s creating positive change for charter schools and the public education system as a whole. Grassroots constituent power makes a difference! Register on the MCSN website at the *MCSN Advocacy Action Center* to receive updates about legislation impacting Maryland charter schools. You will also receive action alerts that provide you with the opportunity to contact your legislator at key moments in the legislative process. MCSN is also available to speak to groups.

MCSN also offers an Advocacy Handbook for use by Maryland charter schools and Parent Organizations. Go to [www.mdcharternetwork.org](http://www.mdcharternetwork.org) to download a copy.

*Take Action For Charters!*

*The MCSN Advocacy Center can be found at [www.mdcharternetwork.org](http://www.mdcharternetwork.org)*