

## **Communicating scientific research to Congress**

- Members of Congress and their staff rely on scientists and experts in public health to highlight areas of concern and to propose interventions/solutions
- Your research or findings could play a significant role in the way legislation is drafted and the issues it addresses
- Few members of Congress and few of their staff in their personal offices have advanced scientific or public health degrees
- Congressional offices are often flooded with request from various interests, so be prepared to make your case

## **How does a typical Hill office take in information?**

- Staff are assigned to various issues (health, environment, education, transportation etc.)
- Most House office have 2-4 legislative staff who split all of the legislative issues in the office
- Most Senate offices have 6-10 legislative staff who split all of the legislative issues in the office
- It is not unusual for one legislative staff member handle 5 or more issues in their portfolio

## Working with Hill legislative staff in a personal office

- Staff are often generally aware of issues such as climate change, but they may have little understanding of the health impacts or the latest research findings
- A typical staff members takes many meetings in a day and most meetings are scheduled in 15-20 minute increments!
- Less is more – a 10 page research paper is unlikely to be read, let alone understood
- Prepare short fact sheets that highlight your findings and use real-world examples (state-specific examples are best if available)
- Some staff will ask you to email them background information and more information about your “ask” instead of leaving behind “paper”

## Working with professional staff on a Congressional committee

- These staff technically work for the Chairman of the committee or subcommittee, but also serve as a resource to the staff in a member of Congress' personal office
- These staff tend to be more experienced and will often have significant expertise in the issue areas they work on but will take meetings with outside groups/experts
- These staff have significant influence on which issues, bills, witnesses and other business will appear before a committee (or subcommittee) as business (hearings, markups etc.)
- APHA and other public health groups worked with both committee staff and personal office staff to get climate and health language included in the House-passed climate change bill in 2009.

## **Follow up is key**

- Keep the relationship going
- Follow up with new information and offer to serve as a reviewer of any legislation they propose for which you have expertise
- Don't be too persistent. Staff a very busy and don't always expect an immediate response.
- Become a resource and eventually they will be reaching out to you!

# THANK YOU!

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