



Advocacy in the Time of COVID

September 2020

Advocacy in the COVID-19 Era: Using NAFME Resources to Engage as an Active Music Education Advocate

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The COVID-19 pandemic has changed much about our society and how we educate our students. One aspect that has not changed is the importance of advocacy and the responsibility music educators have to ensure music education is accessible to every student. Music educators are innovative by nature. What steps can you take to protect music education during these uncertain times, and to ensure students continue to have access to music education throughout the duration of virtual learning? Fortunately, the [National Association for Music Education](#) (NAfME) has several resources available to help as you advocate.

Many tenets of advocacy that are important during “normal” times can be applied today, albeit in a different manner. Educating yourself on developments in education policy in Maryland, as well as how the pandemic has affected education policy nationwide, is critical to your ability to advocate. The NAFME Public Policy staff has developed resources to help keep Maryland Music Educators Association (MMEA)/NAfME members informed.

The [Civic Action Field Guide](#) is designed to help music educators and stakeholders better understand the processes behind how public education is governed and funded. This resource will be particularly useful this year, as it provides an overview of how to participate in the electoral process and teaches how to ascertain candidates’ position on education and other issues.

In addition to the Field Guide, the [Local Advocacy Action Plan](#) is intended to aid music educators and supporters as they seek to improve the overall condition of a music program. This resource contains a roadmap for pursuing new resources and opportunities, which can improve a music educator’s ability to provide a high-quality music education experience for all students. Both of these resources contain useful information and can be invaluable to a music educator wanting to become involved in protecting music education. Our national association also provides [Quarterly Advocacy Webinars](#). Presented by NAFME Public Policy staff, a team of dedicated experts provide music education advocates with the latest in politics, education

public policy, resources, and other need-to-know information surrounding music education advocacy. The webinars in 2020 have largely been focused on music education policy during COVID-19 as well as exploring the connection between music education and social emotional learning.

Through the [Advocacy Leadership Force](#) (ALF), NAFME regularly disseminates education news to state MEA advocacy officials. The ALF Weekly News Roundup is a newsletter containing NAFME news, state and national news in education, and research and analysis in the field. NAFME also holds monthly calls with state ALF representatives to provide an overview of recent trends, developments, and accomplishments in education policy and music education advocacy. The Maryland ALF representative, Ron Frezzo, is an avid consumer of education news and participates in these calls regularly. He finds many MEAs are being rather assertive in the way they advocate for continued and augmented support for arts education, speaking to legislators and administrators responsible for funding and curriculum. If you are interested in receiving the ALF News Roundup, email Matt Barusch (NAFME State Advocacy Engagement Manager) at mattb@nafme.org.

In addition to staying informed, communicating with your elected officials is paramount to advocacy, and perhaps now more important than ever before. States are facing [unprecedented revenue shortfalls](#) that, in some states, are resulting in cuts to education budgets. Additionally, due to the virtual nature of education, students without access to reliable internet are in danger of being left behind in their educational growth. Referred to as the 'Homework Gap', this issue and the issue of state education funding can both be solved by Congress. Your elected officials in Washington, DC, should be urged to act by their constituents. Through the NAFME [Grassroots Action Center](#), it is incredibly easy to engage your representatives in Congress on these issues.

In addition to the resources NAFME provides, the Maryland Music Educators Association will be facilitating a Fall 2020 letter-writing campaign asking teachers to contact Federal and Maryland State officials to encourage maintenance of funding for education and the arts.