



**LI Non-Profits Advocacy Coalition
Advocacy/Communications Strategy**

Visit www.unitedwayli.org/advocacy

Long Island Non-Profits Coalition - Advocacy/Communications Strategy

Campaign Objective: To use the individual and collective voices of Long Island’s non-profit community to educate and convince New York State, Nassau and Suffolk counties that funding to organizations addressing critical health and human services issues must be maintained and investments even increased.

I. Identify and Reach Out to Target Audiences:

A. Elected officials

The primary audience for this advocacy effort is **state and local elected officials**, including the Governor, NYS Senators and Assembly members, as well as Nassau and Suffolk legislators. Note those who serve on relevant committees, whether at the state or local level, and acknowledge these committee assignments, if possible.

Use the attached [email template](#), [key messages](#) and [talking points](#) as a start to reach out to all those who represent the district(s) where you provide your services, and where you, your staff, board members, volunteers and, if appropriate, clients live. Below are some easy links to find your state and local legislators along with contact information for the Governor:

Governor: By email: gov.cuomo@chamber.state.ny.us

By filling out the attached form:

<https://www.governor.ny.gov/content/governor-contact-form>

Or by mail:

The Honorable Andrew M. Cuomo
Governor of New York State
NYS State Capitol Building
Albany, NY 12224

New York State: <https://www.nysenate.gov/find-my-senator>
<https://assembly.state.ny.us/mem/search/>

Nassau County: <https://lrv.nassaucountyny.gov/mni/>

Suffolk County: <http://gis3.suffolkcountyny.gov/VoterInformation/>

B. Media

Another important audience is the **media** – mainstream and weeklies. Identify key news outlets (Newsday, News12, patch.com, even extend into the NYC media market if your pitch is compelling enough), then identify specific journalists and columnists at each outlet to send personalized “pitch” emails followed-up with calls. A [draft pitch email](#) is attached for your reference. Research should be done beforehand to see what stories they’ve covered in the past and from what angles. Each pitch should

be personalized to your agency, the impact proposed cuts may have and, if possible – always respecting client confidentiality – include a personal story, success, potential impact, etc.

Agencies should start by reaching out to those journalists who've covered them or their sector before. Examples are listed below but this list is far from exhaustive.

- **Newsday:** Lisa Colangelo, David Reich-Hale, David Olson, Matthew Chayes, Yancey Roy (Albany Bureau Chief)
- **News12:** Assignment Desk. Also, specific reporters who've covered similar issues (Beth Cefalu, Danielle Campbell, Shari Einhorn)

With respect to weeklies, each community has its own weekly paper so just like with legislators, find the papers that cover the communities you serve and reach out to their editors to either propose that they cover this story or submit an agency-specific press release (template attached) or oped from your executive director, board chair, client (if appropriate) or volunteer.

II. Identify and Coordinate with Partners

(below are a few suggestions and not a complete list)

A. Civic Organizations

Consistent with one of the key messages, this is more than a health and human services issue; this is also a business issue that's critical to the economic sustainability of Long Island. There are more than 150 civic organizations across Long Island, including village by village civic associations, Rotary Clubs, etc. Then there are some pan-Island groups including the following: CAALI (Civic Association Alliance of Long Island); Nassaucivic.com (Nassau County Civic Association); Vision Long Island (visionlongisland.org); longislandassociation.org (Long Island Association). Do a quick audit to see if any board members, staff or engaged volunteers are involved with these organizations.

B. Faith-based organizations

Often times, local churches, mosques, synagogues and other places of worship are a safe space where community members turn during times of crisis. These faith-based organizations generally know and value the work you and your agencies do and the support you provide. Some need only be approached to reach out to state and local legislators, write a letter to the editor or even speak on your agency's behalf to the press or another party. Identify them and reach out to them to gauge their willingness to get involved.

C. NYS Associations/Organizations

There should be a coordinated communications effort with statewide organizations and associations that address the same issues on a statewide levels (local cuts are obviously different). This list is far from exhaustive but should be a good start:

NAMI, MHANYS, NYMHCA, ASAPNYS, NYS Children's Alliance, NYSCADV. Agencies know best who the organizations/leaders are.

III. Channels and Tools:

A. *Social media*

A coordinated social media campaign among 100+ agencies across Long Island has tremendous potential. For example, if every agency (and all their clients, volunteers, donors, etc.) used a common hashtag (#longislandunited or #NYSsmart – one may even already exist), there's a good chance it'll go viral and your target audiences will know people are paying attention. Agencies should post similar messages on their social media platforms with graphically compelling images that are easy to share and repost – see samples at

www.unitedwayli.org/advocacy

B. *Opinion pieces/Opeds in both daily and weekly press*

In addition to viewing the media as a secondary target (and a means to reach elected officials, who are the primary target), these types of placements and press opportunities are a channel or tool to get your key messages across. Agencies should write opeds reinforcing key messages for dailies like Newsday and patch.com, but also for weekly papers in their communities, which have a high level of readership. As mentioned, the oped can be written by the executive director, board chair/member, volunteer or if appropriate, a client. Below are some examples both of what's already appeared as well as ideas for just of a couple of the columnists who can be pitched to write a strong opinion piece:

- *Opeds* (see Joe Smith example below)
- *Columns/opinion pieces* (see Austin Frakt NYT column below; also consider pitching to Joye Brown, God Squad/Rabbi Marc Gellman at Newsday)
- *Editorials* (see Newsday editorial below)

<https://www.newsday.com/opinion/commentary/unwise-cuts-needed-programs-pandemic-covid-19-coronavirus-mental-health-addiction-long-island-reach-1.50101438>

<https://www.newsday.com/opinion/editorial/mental-health-crisis-jobs-uncertainty-future-coronavirus-covid-19-1.44858510>

<https://www.nytimes.com/2017/04/24/upshot/spend-a-dollar-on-drug-treatment-and-save-more-on-crime-reduction.html>

C. *Fact Sheets*

Each agency should produce a simple fact sheet based on their sector and organization. A basic fact sheet should be no longer than a page and include both words and graphics/images. Consider including some or all of the following:

- Organization mission/vision

- What you do/brief description of organization
- Who you serve, including numbers and specific examples (a simple case study or two that doesn't breach any confidentiality)
- How you operate
- Some basic financials, illustrating the dramatic impact of a 20-30% cut
- Some key metrics including measurable impact, results
- Key milestones
- Some sort of powerful infographics and/or images

VI. Timing

The New York State budget is due April 1st. While Nassau and Suffolk counties are on a different budget cycle, much of the funding is interconnected. To have the greatest impact, outreach and media efforts should take place from now through mid-March. But importantly, agency outreach and advocacy efforts shouldn't stop after this year's budget is finalized, regardless of the outcome. Once lines of communication are established with elected officials, the focus should be on continuing to build those relationships and keeping them informed of the work you do and the impact you make.