

# An Advocate's Autism Action Kit

**Want your government to make the right decisions for  
people and families affected by autism?  
Tell them how they can!**

**In this packet you'll find:**

## **Government info**

- ⊕ The State of Delaware's legislative and budget processes
- ⊕ State legislators' contact information

## **Action Guides**

- ⊕ Writing to your legislators
- ⊕ Writing to your local papers
- ⊕ Meeting with your legislators- at their offices, constituent gatherings, or even in your home!
- ⊕ Tips for people with autism on visiting Legislative Hall

**For the most current information about policy issues  
Autism Delaware is working on, visit  
[www.autismdelaware.org](http://www.autismdelaware.org)!**

# The Budget and Legislative Process- A Brief Overview

## The Budget

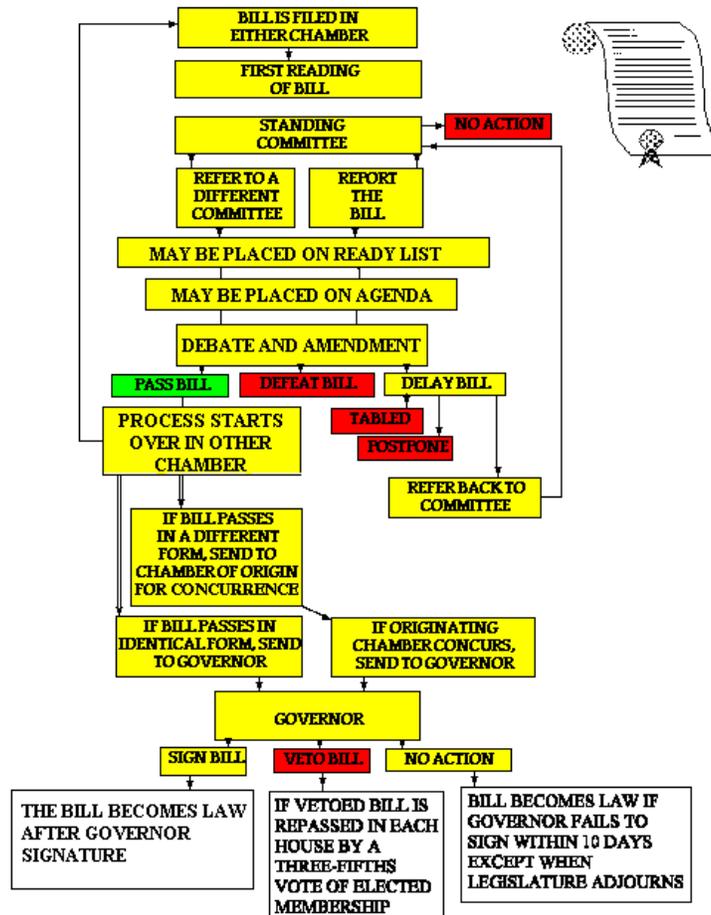
Delaware's fiscal year runs July 1 through June 30. In the executive branch, state agencies work over the summer and fall to develop their budgets and submit their requests to the Office of Management and Budget in October. In November, the agencies make formal presentations of their requests to OMB in a series of public hearings, at which the public is invited to testify. The information presented forms the basis for the governor's budget, which they submit to the General Assembly in January.

On the legislative side, the governor's budget is promptly introduced as two new pieces of legislation- the operating and capital budgets. The Joint Finance Committee, made up of six representatives and six senators, then holds six weeks of hearings at which the state agencies make their case for their requests in the operating budget, and again the public is invited to testify. The JFC works throughout the session on the operating budget, and goes into a formal "Mark-Up" process in May, meaning that they add or remove budget lines, or increase or decrease the amounts allocated. All of their deliberations are now open to the public as the result of a 2009 law. The Bond Bill Committee reviews the capital budget requests.

A final budget is presented to all legislators for their vote late in the session- until 2010, legislators typically did not see the budget until the last day when it had to pass. Because of that short time for all legislators to review, it is critical to advocate budget policy issues to JFC members as well as one's own legislators.

## The Legislative Process

### How A Bill Becomes A Law



This graphic may be found on the General Assembly's website at [www.legis.delaware.gov](http://www.legis.delaware.gov)

## State Elected Officials Contact Information- 2013-2014

	Name	Address	Office Telephone		E-mail Address
<b>Governor</b>	Jack A. Markell	150 William Penn St. Tatnall Bldg. 2 <sup>nd</sup> Fl., Dover 19901	744-4101 K	577-3210 NC	Jack.Markell@state.de.us
<b>Lt. Governor</b>	Matthew Denn	150 William Penn St. Tatnall Bldg. 3 <sup>rd</sup> Fl., Dover 19901	744-4333 K	577-8787 NC	Matthew.Denn@state.de.us

### State Senate: P.O. Box 1401, Dover, DE 19903

Dist	Party/Name	Street/P.O.	City	Zip	Home	Office	E-mail Address
1	<b>Harris B. McDowell, III</b>	<b>2311 Baynard Blvd.</b>	<b>Wilmington</b>	<b>19802</b>	<b>656-2921</b>	<b>744-4147</b>	<b>Harris.McDowell@state.de.us</b>
2	Margaret Rose Henry	1910 N. Washington St.	Wilmington	19802	425-4148	744-4191	MargaretRose.Henry@state.de.us
3	Robert I. Marshall	820 N. French St., 11 <sup>th</sup> Floor	Wilmington	19801		744-4168	Robert.Marshall@state.de.us
4	Greg Lavelle	500 Whitby Drive	Wilmington	19803		744-4048	gregory.lavelle@state.de.us
5	<b>Catherine A. Cloutier</b>	<b>2404 Heather Rd. East</b>	<b>Wilmington</b>	<b>19803</b>	<b>478-9616</b>	<b>744-4197</b>	<b>Cloutiercathy@aol.com</b>
6	Ernesto Lopez	34108 Juniper Drive	Lewes	19958		744-4136	ernesto.lopez@state.de.us
7	Patricia M. Blevins*	209 Linden Ave.	Wilmington	19805	994-4843	744-4133	Patricia.Blevins@state.de.us
8	David P. Sokola	24 Beech Hill Dr.	Newark	19711	239-2193	744 4139	David.Sokola@state.de.us
9	<b>Karen E. Peterson</b>	<b>1306 W. Newport Pike</b>	<b>Wilmington</b>	<b>19804</b>	<b>999-7522</b>	<b>744-4163</b>	<b>Karen.Peterson@state.de.us</b>
10	Bethany A. Hall-Long	127 St. Augustine Court	Middletown	19709	378-8386	744-4138	Bethany.Hall-Long@state.de.us
11	Bryan Townsend					744-4165	Bryan.Townsend@state.de.us
12	Nicole Poore	315 Wheatsheaf Drive	New Castle	19720	577-8740	744-4164	Nicole.Poore@state.de.us
13	David B. McBride	7 Nicole Ct.	New Castle	19720	322-6100	744-4167	David.McBride@state.de.us
14	<b>Bruce A. Ennis</b>	<b>522 Smyrna /Clayton Blvd.</b>	<b>Smyrna</b>	<b>19977</b>	<b>653-7566</b>	<b>744-4310</b>	<b>Bruce.Ennis@state.de.us</b>
15	<b>David Lawson</b>	<b>2257 Westville Road</b>	<b>Marydel</b>	<b>19964</b>	<b>492-1511</b>	<b>744-4237</b>	<b>Dave.Lawson@state.de.us</b>
16	Colin R. M. J. Bonini	276 Banning Rd.	Camden	19934	698-0960	744-4169	Senator-Colin@prodigy.net
17	<b>Brian J. Bushweller</b>	<b>103 Burning Tree Rd.</b>	<b>Dover</b>	<b>19904</b>	<b>674-5442</b>	<b>744-4162</b>	<b>Brian.Bushweller@state.de.us</b>
18	F. Gary Simpson*	6 W Clarke Ave.	Milford	19963	422-3460	744-4134	GSimpson@udel.edu
19	Brian Pettyjohn	PO Box 616	Georgetown	19947		744-4048	brian.pettyjohn@state.de.us
20	Gerald W. Hocker*	P O Box 930	Ocean View	19970	537-6016	744-4048	Gerald.Hocker@state.de.us
21	Robert L. Venables, Sr.	116 Hearn Ave.	Laurel	19956	875-9559	744-4298	Robert.Venables@state.de.us

\*Senate Leadership: President Pro Tem- Blevins; Majority Leader- McBride; Majority Whip- Henry; Minority Leader- Simpson; Minority Whip- Lavelle  
**BOLD=Joint Finance Committee Member**

### State House of Representatives: P.O. Box 1401, Dover, DE 19903

Dist	Party/Name	Street/P.O.	City	Zip	Home	Office	E-mail Address
1	Charles Potter	2605 N. Broom Street	Wilmington	19802	762-8322	744-4351	Charles.Potter@state.de.us
2	Stephanie T. Bolden	38 E. McCaulley Court	Wilmington	19801	428-1269	577-8476	StephanieT.Bolden@state.de.us
3	Helene M. Keeley	P.O. Box 2716	Wilmington	19805	655-7071	577-8476	Helene.Keeley@state.de.us
4	Gerald L. Brady	1804 Shallcross Avenue	Wilmington	19806	655-1373	577-8476	Gerald.Brady@state.de.us
5	<b>Melanie George Smith</b>	<b>12 Calvarese Dr.</b>	<b>Bear</b>	<b>19701</b>	<b>832-1956</b>	<b>577-8843</b>	<b>Melanie.G.Smith@state.de.us</b>
6	<b>Debra Heffernan</b>	<b>113 Blue Rock Road</b>	<b>Wilmington</b>	<b>19809</b>	<b>762-3478</b>	<b>577-8476</b>	<b>Debra.Heffernan@state.de.us</b>
7	Bryon H. Short	14 Chestnut Rd.	Wilmington	19810	475-2252	744-4351	Bryon.Short@state.de.us
8	S. Quinton Johnson	151 Back Creek Dr.	Middletown	19709	378-2681	577-8476	Quinton.Johnson@state.de.us
9	Rebecca Walker	4386 S DuPont Highway	Townsend	19734		744-4351	Rebecca.Walker@state.de.us
10	Dennis E. Williams	P. O. Box 7257	Wilmington	19803	373-0115	577-8476	Dennis.E.Williams@state.de.us
11	Jeffrey N. Spiegelman	P.O. Box 869	Clayton	19938		744-4171	Jeffrey.Spiegelman@state.de.us
12	Deborah D. Hudson*	1022 Oriente Ave.	Wilmington	19807	651-9571	577-8723	Deborah.Hudson@state.de.us
13	John L. Mitchell, Jr.	1234 Sycamore Avenue	Wilmington	19805	995-1803	577-8342	John.L.Mitchell@state.de.us
14	Peter C. Schwartzkopf*	24 Coventry Rd.	Rehoboth Beach	19971	227-6252	744-4351	Peter.Schwartzkopf@state.de.us
15	Valerie J. Longhurst*	11 Winchester Ct.	Bear	19701	836-3717	577-8476	Valerie.Longhurst@state.de.us
16	<b>James Johnson</b>	<b>105 Skelton Dr.</b>	<b>New Castle</b>	<b>19720</b>	<b>322-3521</b>	<b>577-8476</b>	<b>Jj.Johnson@state.de.us</b>
17	Michael P. Mulrooney	32 Saratoga Dr.	New Castle	19720	322-1249	577-8476	Michael.Mulrooney@state.de.us
18	Michael A. Barbieri	88 Iroquois Ct.	Newark	19702	420-6564	577-8476	Michael.Barbieri@state.de.us
19	Kim Williams	23 Weer Circle	Wilmington	19808		744-4351	Kimberly.Williams@state.de.us
20	Stephen T. Smyk					744-4171	Steve.Smyk@state.de.us
21	Michael Ramone	211 Nathan Ct.	Newark	19711	737-7529	577-8187	Michael.Ramone@state.de.us
22	<b>Joseph E. Miro</b>	<b>5 Firechase Circle</b>	<b>Newark</b>	<b>19711</b>	<b>454-1840</b>	<b>577-8723</b>	<b>Joseph.Miro@state.de.us</b>
23	Paul Baumbach				562-4546	744-4351	Paul.Baumbach@state.de.us
24	Ed Osienki	183 Scottfield Drive	Newark	19713	292-8903	577-8476	edward.osienki@state.de.us
25	John A. Kowalko, Jr.	14 Kells Ave.	Newark	19711	737-2396	577-8342	John.Kowalko@state.de.us
26	John J. Viola*	P. O. Box 1626	Bear	19701	832-2209	577-8453	John.Viola@state.de.us
27	Earl G. Jaques, Jr.	82 Cann Rd.	Newark	19702	834-9231	577-8187	Earl.Jaques@state.de.us
28	<b>William J. Carson, Jr.</b>	<b>680 Lake Dr. West</b>	<b>Smyrna</b>	<b>19977</b>	<b>653-8642</b>	<b>744-4351</b>	<b>William.Carson@state.de.us</b>
29	Trey Paradee	22 Bell Miner Court	Dover	19904		744-4351	Trey.Paradee@state.de.us
30	William R. Outten	206 Delaware Ave.	Harrington	19952	398-3816	744-4171	Bobby.Outten@state.de.us
31	Darryl M. Scott	102 Cobblestone Ln.	Dover	19904	747-7765	744-4351	Darryl.Scott@state.de.us
32	Andria Bennett	71 Saint Jones Avenue	Dover	19903		744-4351	Andria.Bennett@state.de.us
33	Harold Peterman	595 Log Cabin Road	Milford	19963	335-4261	744-4171	Jack.Peterman@state.de.us
34	Donald A. Blakey	956 Bison Rd.	Dover	19904	697-6723	744-4171	Donald.Blakey@state.de.us
35	David L. Wilson	P.O. Box 84	Lincoln	19960	422-9270	744-4171	David.L.Wilson@state.de.us
36	<b>Harvey Kenton</b>	<b>3 Quail Ridge Road</b>	<b>Milford</b>	<b>19963</b>	<b>422-6155</b>	<b>744-4171</b>	<b>Harvey.Kenton@state.de.us</b>
37	Ruth Briggs King	3 Par Court	Georgetown	19947	856-2772	744-4171	Ruth.BriggsKing@state.de.us
38	Ronald Gray					744-4171	Ronald.Gray@state.de.us
39	Daniel B. Short*	133 N. Cannon St.	Seaford	19973	629-6525	744-4171	Daniel.Short@state.de.us
40	Timothy Dukes	4777 Philips Landing Road	Laurel	19956	280-6344	744-4171	Tim.Dukes@state.de.us
41	John C. Atkins	P. O. Box 717	Millsboro	19966	934-1587	744-4351	John.Atkins@state.de.us

\*Leadership: Speaker- Schwartzkopf; Majority Leader- Longhurst; Majority Whip- Viola; Minority Leader- Short; Minority Whip- Hudson  
**BOLD=Joint Finance Committee Member**

*Thank you to the League of Women Voters of Delaware; this list was adapted from their publication "They Represent You"*

**Unsure who your legislator is? Visit [www.votesmart.org](http://www.votesmart.org) and enter your zipcode.**

# Writing to Your Legislators

Writing to your legislators is an easy way to make sure they hear your message, and as a constituent, your words carry a lot of weight. Here is an easy outline to follow and a sample letter using it.

- ❖ Introduction: Tell them what you are writing about in the first or second sentence. Introduce yourself and your family. Tell your legislator that your child (or you) has autism (and/or other disability/ies) and explain what that means and the effects. Tell them about the future your child (or you) hope to have.
- ❖ Middle: Tell them what issue you are writing about, and how you and/or your family will be affected. If there is no funding for new grads, will a parent have to quit their job or go on public assistance? If there were insurance coverage for autism treatments, what do you believe it would accomplish for your child or family? Would you be able to get out of debt, save for college for other children, avoid bankruptcy, etc.? Be honest and clear.
- ❖ Closing: Close by repeating your request for their support of your position.
- ❖ In any of the above paragraphs, use numbers and dollar figures wherever appropriate, and put your main points in **bold**.

## SAMPLE

*The Honorable Jane Doe  
State Senate  
PO Box 1401  
Dover, DE 19901*

*Dear Senator Doe,*

***I am writing to ask you to support funding for the Family Support Waiver, a program to provide support services for young adults with developmental disabilities who choose to live in their family's home rather than a state-funded residential placement.*** *My wife and I have raised two wonderful children in <<neighborhood>>, Jane and Bob. Bob is 20 and has severe autism, a neurological disorder that affects his ability to communicate and interact with others. He cannot speak and finds it very difficult to be around crowds, but the services of the Delaware Autism Program (a public school) and the staff at <<provider>> have helped him to develop work skills like filing, shredding, and sorting to prepare him for a job in a local doctor's office.*

*We look forward to both of our children going to work when they complete their education, but unlike Jane and most other young adults Bob's age, even then he will continue to live year-round with us for the foreseeable future and require constant supervision. Caring for a grown man who can still have tantrums when we cannot understand what he tries to say or when his routine is upset is both emotionally and physically taxing.*

*Without the help of the Family Support Waiver to get more respite care, we will have to seek a residential placement through the State for Bob. We know a number of families facing similar dilemmas; their son or daughter is comfortable in the family home but just need a little more personalized help—maybe respite or behavioral therapy or transportation - for their families to continue to provide primary care for them.*

*We know that the State has difficult budget decisions to make. We will care for Bob as long as we are able, and the State is certainly better off spending a couple of thousand dollars to help us do that than spending tens of thousands on residential placements. Please help Bob and the many other young adults like him stay in their homes by funding the Family Support Waiver.*

*Sincerely,  
Pat Smith*

# Writing to The Media

Writing letters to the editor is a little different. Not only do you have far fewer words available, but they can edit it even further. It's important to focus on your message, and get just one to three points across as concisely as possible. Again, be clear and honest.

A good letter will catch the attention of legislators and members of the public who might not have known about the issue you're raising- maybe you'll inspire others to write too!

These samples are provided to give you ideas, but **please do not copy them for your own**; if papers get the same story from multiple people, chances are they won't print them- and the best story to tell is always your own!

My son has autism, and has a better life than I ever hoped for; with the support of a job coach, he has a job he likes delivering mail on the campus of a major Delaware corporation. But his provider has had only a 4% increase in the past three years after eight years with no increase, even as gas and other costs went up. To save transportation costs, my son will soon work his hours over three days instead of five and be home the other two; we are scrambling to find someone to care for him those days so we can continue to work and prepare for when we're no longer here for him. We'll take care of him as long as we can, but the state needs to do its part too. Call your legislators and tell them providers of disabilities' services need fair pay!

Below are email addresses to which you can send your letter(s) to the editor.\*

Brandywine, Greenville, Hockessin, and Mill Creek Community News, and Your Better Years	<a href="mailto:editor@communitypub.com">editor@communitypub.com</a>	Milford Beacon	<a href="mailto:melissa@milfordbeacon.com">melissa@milfordbeacon.com</a>
The Cape Gazette	<a href="mailto:newsroom@capegazette.com">newsroom@capegazette.com</a>	Milford Chronicle	<a href="mailto:mc@newszap.com">mc@newszap.com</a>
Coastal Point	<a href="mailto:darin.mccann@coastalpoint.com">darin.mccann@coastalpoint.com</a>	Newark Post	<a href="mailto:sgoss@chespub.com">sgoss@chespub.com</a>
Delaware Coast Press	<a href="mailto:dcp@dmg.gannett.com">dcp@dmg.gannett.com</a>	The News Journal	<a href="mailto:letters@delawareonline.com">letters@delawareonline.com</a>
Delaware State News	<a href="mailto:newsroom@newszap.com">newsroom@newszap.com</a>	Out & About Magazine	<a href="mailto:contact@out-and-about.com">contact@out-and-about.com</a>
Dover Post	<a href="mailto:jeff.brown@doverpost.com">jeff.brown@doverpost.com</a>	The Review	<a href="mailto:theudreview@gmail.com">theudreview@gmail.com</a>
El Tiempo Hispano	<a href="mailto:info@eltiempohispano.com">info@eltiempohispano.com</a>	Seaford Leader & State Register	<a href="mailto:leader@newszap.com">leader@newszap.com</a>
Harrington Journal	<a href="mailto:landerson@newszap.com">landerson@newszap.com</a>	Seaford Star	<a href="mailto:publisher@seafordstar.com">publisher@seafordstar.com</a>
Hoy en Delaware	<a href="mailto:jsomalo@mchsi.com">jsomalo@mchsi.com</a>	Smyrna/Clayton Sun-Times	<a href="mailto:ben.mace@doverpost.com">ben.mace@doverpost.com</a>
The Laurel Star	<a href="mailto:morningstarpub@ddmq.net">morningstarpub@ddmq.net</a>	Sussex Countian	<a href="mailto:patrick@sussexcountian.com">patrick@sussexcountian.com</a>
Long Neck News	<a href="mailto:longnecknews@aol.com">longnecknews@aol.com</a>	Sussex County Online	<a href="mailto:webmaster@sussexcountyonline.com">webmaster@sussexcountyonline.com</a>
Middletown Transcript	<a href="mailto:shauna@middletowntranscript.com">shauna@middletowntranscript.com</a>	The Sussex County Post	<a href="mailto:sussexpost@newszap.com">sussexpost@newszap.com</a>
		The Wave:	<a href="mailto:wave@dmg.gannett.com">wave@dmg.gannett.com</a>

\*Thanks to Douglas Marshall-Steele at [www.towardequality.org](http://www.towardequality.org) for collecting these addresses and permitting their use here.

## Hosting A Legislative Visit to Your Home

*This is a great way to bring the message about how policies affect people and families home to your legislators. By visiting your home, legislators get a firsthand look at why autism-friendly policies are so critical to their constituents.*

### Inviting Your Legislator

You can invite them by email, phone, or postal mail and be specific about what you would like to discuss. It does not have to be about a specific bill or budget item; if there is a problem you believe state government should be addressing or aware of, that is the kind of thing to keep your legislator informed of.

We suggest you invite their family for two reasons: 1) the opportunity to not have to choose between their service (which is 24/7/365 and often a second job) and time with their family is a kindness and 2) if they are not themselves affected by disability, the visual comparison of your family to theirs may be compelling. **If you prefer to meet only with them, that still accomplishes the core goal of making sure they are aware of their constituents' needs.** Inviting other families from their district may also increase the chance of their accepting the meeting because they will be able to address a number of constituents at once.

Offer your legislators a choice of a few different dates and times if you can, and invite them to make their own suggestions. Remember that they are in session Tuesday-Thursday during many weeks between the second Tuesday of January and July 1.

### During The Meeting

As host, take the lead in explaining why you invited them. If there is more than one family at the visit, take turns telling how they are (or would be) affected, though it would be best to keep each story to just a few minutes, and then open it up to questions from the legislator.

When politics gets down to such a personal level, it can be easy for the dialogue to go in a direction that makes people feel angry, upset, or defensive. These meetings are intended to raise awareness and secure their support; the latter may take more than one evening and more voices than just those in the room. Focus on keeping the discussion positive and constructive. And of course at the end, thank them for taking the time to meet with you.

### After The Meeting

Send your legislator a personal thank-you note for meeting with you, and repeat your request or thanks for their support. Before your guests leave, ask them to write thank-you notes too, and share the legislators' contact information with them. While your communications with your legislator are of course personal, Autism Delaware does find it helpful to our own advocacy efforts to know how legislators respond to autism issues so if you'd like, let us know how it went!

### How Autism Delaware Can Help

If you want to address issues with your legislator that we are working on or support, we can:

- 🍷 provide talking points;
- 🍷 identify and invite other families in your district to join you

## **Meeting a Legislator in their Office or Local Constituent Hour**

*Personal contact with legislators is very effective. Some host open meetings in their districts on a regular basis, many are willing to set up a personal meeting or call with a constituent, and all have offices at Legislative Hall where they can receive visitors.*

### **Arranging the Meeting**

If your legislator does not have a regular meeting in your district or you cannot attend that, you can call or email them to ask for an appointment either in the district or at Legislative Hall when they are in session.

Some people may feel intimidated at the idea of asking for an appointment. Remember that it is their job to represent you and your input helps them do that job. Legislators genuinely like hearing from you!

### **At the Meeting**

You may only have a few minutes with your legislator. Introduce yourself and tell them about your family member with autism or why you are concerned about someone with autism. Explain how existing or proposed policies affect or could affect your family or others that you know. Ask them for their support.

Keep in mind that elected officials are responsible for a wide variety of policies and agencies and may not know the fine details of DDDS adult programs, insurance, or autism. Answer their questions as best you can, and don't be afraid to say "I don't know, but I will try to find that out for you." Then contact Autism Delaware with those questions and we will do our best to get the information.

### **After the Meeting**

Thank them for their time, and follow up with a thank-you note or email. While your communications with your legislator are of course personal, Autism Delaware does find it helpful to our own advocacy efforts to know how legislators respond to autism issues so if you'd like, let us know how it went!

### **How Autism Delaware Can Help**

If you want to address issues with your legislator that we are working on or support, we can:

- 👤 provide talking points;
- 👤 help secure an appointment in Legislative Hall or find out when your legislators are holding constituent meetings
- 👤 send a staff member or volunteer to Legislative Hall to go with you or provide moral support in advance or after your meeting.

## Helpful Tips for People with Autism on Visiting Legislative Hall

- 🚫 There is a cafeteria in the basement for snacks and to take a break.
- 🚫 All adults will need a photo ID.
- 🚫 To enter the building, you will have to put your possessions through an X-ray machine and walk through a metal detector. It will beep if it senses metal such as a belt buckle or bra underwire. If it beeps, security guards will stop you. Follow their instructions on where and how to stand. They will pass a wand by your torso, arms, and legs to identify what is causing the beep.
- 🚫 There are often delays.
- 🚫 There are often crowds and a lot of people talking at once.
- 🚫 The upper galleries of the House and Senate (accessible by stairs and elevators) face hanging lights near eye level. There is usually some limited seating in the main chamber if you don't like bright lights.
- 🚫 A sound system is used in the House and Senate and there are speakers at the gallery level and on the main level.
- 🚫 The main areas of Legislative Hall and the offices use fluorescent lighting.
- 🚫 The House, Senate, hallways, and main foyer have marble floors and high ceilings. There are a lot of echoes.
- 🚫 Bells may ring to summon legislators to start working in their chambers. It rings once for the Senate, twice for the House. These bell patterns will ring multiple times once begun.
- 🚫 Legislators may talk to you or want to shake your hand. Do the best you can, but if it makes you uncomfortable, you or your parent or companion can politely explain your boundaries to them.