



AMETHIST

AMETHIST@Penn:
Achieving Maternal
Empowerment
and Transforming
Health through
Implementation
Science and
Training

RESOURCE

Practical and Persuasive Communication with Policymakers

A Guide for Maternal Health Researchers

Effectively communicating with policymakers is essential to advancing maternal health policies, especially those that address disparities and promote health empowerment. This resource equips researchers, advocates, and public health professionals with persuasive strategies grounded in communication theory and practical experience to ensure their voices are heard and their messages resonate.

Why This Matters

Black, Indigenous, and other historically marginalized communities continue to face disproportionate maternal mortality and morbidity. Policymakers have the power to implement structural changes, but they rely on clear, compelling, and actionable communication to guide their decisions.

What You'll Find Inside

This guide includes:

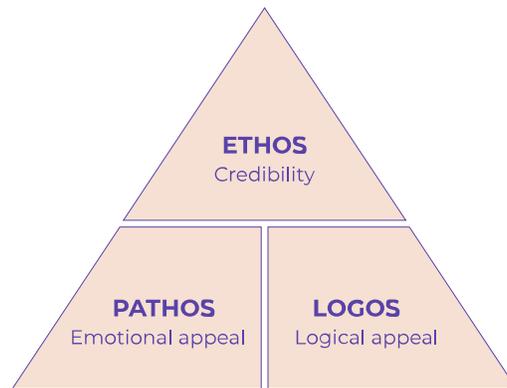
- **Aristotle's Persuasive Proofs (Ethos, Pathos, Logos)**– to help you establish credibility, appeal to emotions, and present evidence-based arguments, pg. 2
- **Cialdini's Principles of Influence** – to show how strategies like reciprocity, authority, and social proof can build support and urgency, pg. 3
- **Practical Tips** – to ensure your message is accessible, memorable, and aligned with policy priorities, pgs. 4–5

Who This is For

Whether you're preparing to meet with a legislator, drafting a policy brief, or presenting your research to decision-makers, this guide will help you:

- Frame maternal health issues in a way that moves people to act.
- Communicate with clarity and confidence.
- Promote policies that center empowerment and save lives.

ARISTOTLE'S THREE PERSUASIVE PROOFS



Ethos (Credibility)

Establish Your Expertise: To persuade effectively, you need to be seen as credible. Introduce yourself or your organization with authority, showcasing your qualifications, experience, or research to establish trust.

EXAMPLE: “As a researcher with over a decade of experience in maternal health... I’ve seen firsthand how targeted interventions can dramatically improve outcomes for marginalized populations.”

Cite Reputable Sources: Strengthen your argument by referencing research studies, policy reports, or endorsements from respected experts. This bolsters your credibility and demonstrates that your position is grounded in reliable evidence.

EXAMPLE: “Research from the CDC and WHO supports the link between access to prenatal care and a 20% reduction in maternal mortality among underserved communities.”

Pathos (Emotional Appeal)

Appeal to Emotions: Use stories and testimonials that stir emotions, particularly those related to the health and well-being of communities. Personal stories can connect policymakers to the issue on an emotional level.

EXAMPLE: “I recently spoke with a mother who lost her baby due to complications that could have been prevented with access to better prenatal care. Her story is one of many.”

Highlight the Human Impact: Show how the issue directly affects real people, creating empathy and a sense of urgency. People are more likely to act when they are emotionally connected to the problem.

EXAMPLE: “Every day, 700 women in the U.S. die from preventable causes during pregnancy. We have the power to change this reality.”

Logos (Logical Appeal)

Provide Clear Evidence: Use data, statistics, and logical reasoning to build a rational argument for your policy recommendations. Policymakers often respond to hard facts that show the potential impact of their decisions.

EXAMPLE: “Studies show that investing in maternal health programs can reduce healthcare costs by 30% in the long term due to fewer emergency room visits and improved birth outcomes.”

Anticipate Counterarguments: Address potential objections or concerns proactively by offering data or reasoning to counter them. This demonstrates that you’ve thought through the issue and reinforces your logical appeal.

EXAMPLE: “While some may argue that the cost of expanding prenatal care programs is prohibitive, research shows that every dollar spent on maternal health saves \$4 in future healthcare costs.”



CIALDINI'S PRINCIPLES OF INFLUENCE



1. Reciprocity (Mutual Benefit)

Give Before You Take: Build goodwill by offering something of value upfront. This could be information, support, or assistance in areas where the policymaker might need help.

EXAMPLE: “I’d be happy to share research findings and best practices that have worked in other states to help make the policy implementation smoother.”

Offer Solutions: Rather than just presenting a problem, offer concrete solutions that will make their job easier and help them achieve their goals.

EXAMPLE: “If we expand maternal health education programs, we can reduce the burden on emergency services, saving taxpayers money and improving public health.”



2. Scarcity (Sense of Urgency)

Emphasize Timeliness: Create a sense of urgency around the issue. When people perceive that an opportunity is scarce or limited, they are more likely to take action.

EXAMPLE: “If we don’t act now, we risk missing the window of opportunity to reduce maternal mortality before the rates worsen.”

Show the Cost of Inaction: Help them see that delaying action on maternal health could result in severe consequences, making the opportunity feel more limited.

EXAMPLE: “Every day we wait, another mother could die. We cannot afford to delay action any longer.”



3. Authority (Credibility from Experts)

Cite Experts or Respected Institutions: Refer to authorities, such as medical experts, research organizations, or government agencies, that support your proposal. This can add weight to your argument.

EXAMPLE: “The American Medical Association has endorsed the expansion of prenatal care services as essential to improving maternal health outcomes.”

Leverage Credentials: If you have academic or professional credentials, make sure they’re highlighted to strengthen your position.

EXAMPLE: “As a PhD in public health with extensive research on health disparities, I can assure you this initiative will have a profound impact.”



4. Liking (Building Rapport)

Find Common Ground: Policymakers are more likely to be persuaded by people they like. Build rapport by connecting on shared values or interests.

EXAMPLE: “I know we both care about the health and well-being of our community. Together, we can make a real difference.”

Engage in Active Listening: Make sure to listen to their concerns and respond thoughtfully. This builds trust and makes them more open to your message.

EXAMPLE: “I understand that budget constraints are a concern. Let’s explore cost-effective solutions that still prioritize maternal health.”





5. Social Proof (Consensus)

Show Broad Support: Use examples of widespread support for the issue from other policymakers, organizations, or communities. People are more likely to support an idea if they see others backing it.
EXAMPLE: “This initiative has garnered support from over 50 community organizations and health experts, showing widespread consensus on the importance of maternal health investment.”

Public Support: If public opinion is in favor of the policy, highlight it as evidence of popular support.

EXAMPLE: “A recent survey found that 80% of constituents in your district support expanding access to maternal health services.”



6. Commitment and Consistency (Consistency in Values)

Appeal to Their Past Actions: Remind policymakers of their previous commitments or actions that align with the proposal. People like to act consistently with their past behaviors.

EXAMPLE: “As you’ve consistently championed equitable access to healthcare, this proposal aligns perfectly with your vision for a healthier community.”

Create a Small Commitment: Ask for a small, initial commitment that leads to larger actions. Once someone commits to something, they are more likely to follow through.

EXAMPLE: “Can we count on your support for an initial study into the feasibility of this policy? This small step will pave the way for broader action.”

PRACTICAL TIPS

1. Be Concise and Clear

- Use **plain language**—avoid jargon and academic phrasing.
- Keep documents **brief** (1-2 pages for a policy brief, max 5-10 pages for a full report).
- **Bullet points and subheadings** improve readability.

2. Start with the 'So What?'

- Open with a **clear problem statement** (e.g., “Black and Indigenous mothers face higher maternal mortality rates due to systemic barriers in healthcare access.”)
- Follow with a **key policy recommendation** upfront.

3. Use Data, But Make It Digestible

- Include compelling statistics but limit to 1-3 key data points.
- Use visuals (graphs, infographics) to enhance clarity.

4. Tell a Story

- Personal **vignettes or case studies** make the issue real.
- Example: “Sabrina, a 28-year-old Black mother, was denied early aspirin therapy despite her preeclampsia risk...”

5. Offer Actionable Solutions

- Don't just highlight the problem—**propose clear, feasible solutions** (e.g., “Expand Medicaid postpartum coverage to 12 months to improve maternal health outcomes.”)
- Provide **examples of successful programs** from other states/countries.



6. Align with Policy Priorities

- Frame recommendations in terms of **cost-effectiveness, health empowerment, or economic benefits**—what matters to policymakers.
- Use language that **aligns with their agenda** (e.g., "Reducing maternal mortality improves workforce participation and reduces long-term healthcare costs.").

7. End with a Call to Action

- Be specific: **"We urge Congress to pass [Bill Name] to ensure all at-risk mothers have access to preventative care."**
- Provide contact info for follow-up.

