



Raise Your Hands and Voices -- Sign Up and Speak Out!
Advocacy Empowerment Webinar
Tuesday, April 20, 2021
Transcribed by Intellitext

Rebecca Shanahan: Well, it's 3:30. For those of you that I can see in my gallery view, are you all ready to start? Are we excited? Thumbs up? All right, everybody. Let's do this.

My name is Rebecca Shanahan. First, I want to check in with UNLV to make sure we are recording. I hear a ding on my computer. Oh, everyone is still arriving. Okay.

Natalie, is everyone in? Okay. I got a yes! All right. We're going to start this over! My name is Rebecca Shanahan, and I am the president and founder of Grassroot Girls. I want to welcome you all today to the second webinar we have hosted in partnership with UNLV Las Vegas and the Harrah College of Hospitality. It's a special event, because we've brought along Nevada Hands and Voices to participate. I want to give a special thanks to Professor Willden and the 14 students who have helped organize this webinar.

I also want to thank Beth Jones, Marie Sassman, and Candace Emerson for developing this webinar today.

We have some great content to share with you and some exciting speakers that will hopefully help you all become successful youth advocates. Before we start, let's review some ground rules and accessibility tips.

You should see, in the chat, a link where you can access the live transcription. We will also do our best to ensure that we always have an ASL interpreter in the spotlight of the webinar. If you have any issues, please don't hesitate to unmute yourself. The students will probably pinch me for saying that! Or type it in the chat. We want to make sure everything is running smoothly, and everyone has what they need to follow along. We are no strangers now to virtual events and webinars, so I would ask that otherwise you keep your microphone muted. If you have questions, type it in the chat. There is a phone number and email you can utilize if you're not getting a response from the chat. Feel free to text; that is Professor Willden's phone number.

Most importantly, please be engaged in the activities we have. We are all here to support one another, and hopefully we're here to support one another post-webinar as well.

What are you guys going to be learning this afternoon? We have a lot to cover. The theme is really about empowering all of you young ladies and gentlemen; I know there is a young man on the call as well. To really raise your hands and voices, because everyone has a right to advocate and raise awareness for causes they feel passionate about.

What are we going to learn? We're going to do a little passion discovery. Then we'll visit with several peers who are youth advocates and change-makers. They have already identified their passions, and will share how to get started in your journey. We will review the "who," "when," and "where" and what tools you can use. You have a voice even though you can't vote yet, and you should be able to use it.

Last but not least, we'll talk about amplifying your voice and how to work with organizations like Grassroot Girls and Nevada Hands and Voices to really have your voice alongside others with similar messages. Last but not least, you're going to hear from a fellow Deaf advocate who has used her story to help change policy.

Again, let's be thoughtful and engaged for each presenter. First, I want to share this special trailer with you all.

[Music playing.]

[Captioned video.]

Rebecca Shanahan: I hope that gave many of you some goosebumps and excitement. I know it does for me! It's my pleasure to introduce our host for the remainder of the webinar, the director of Sign the Show, Cat Brewer. Ms. Brewer has had a passion for communicating through education and advocacy. She's been a teacher for 21 years and has been making a documentary for the past seven. She really hopes her documentary will teach audiences about challenges faced by the Deaf and Hard of Hearing community.

She hopes her film will create a cultural shift by making live entertainment more accessible to all individuals for a more inclusive world. As many of you might have noticed, she enjoys a challenge, and she is not only an educator and filmmaker, but an Ironman triathlete. Please give a warm welcome to Cat Brewer.

Cat Brewer: Thank you. Thanks for having me here. I really appreciate it. I'll talk briefly, because we have a lot of fantastic speakers. Three hashtags, if you're young you know what they are. Us older people call it a pound sign! The hashtags I want to talk about are #JusticeForAll, #SigntheShow, and #HustleWithGratitudeAndLove. There are lots of folks advocating for accessibility. This came about for me when I realized, at the age of 45, that I had hearing privilege. I went through my whole life going to concerts and not worrying about what night I would go or if there would be an interpreter there. It was almost eight years ago that I went to a concert, and for the first time I saw a sign language interpreter. I started communicating with the interpreter, because I didn't know any sign language.

After the interpreter explained that Deaf people enjoy concerts, I started communicating with the Deaf people there through the interpreter to find out about different challenges they face when trying to access live music, a comedy show, or a theater production. I never considered myself an "advocate." I always spoke up for things I believed in, but didn't necessarily embrace the title of advocate. I decided to write an article for the school newspaper, and a friend suggested I make a documentary. The fear took over! I was scared to death; I didn't know what I was doing. I had been a teacher for 21 years, not in the entertainment or film business. I found there was a need for some kind of justice for an underserved population of 30 million+ people in the United States alone. I decided to make a movie. There are people like Kelly Clarkson, Train; there are lots of great celebrities that are advocating, but there's also the stories of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing people. That's the story I want them to tell. I'm just the conduit for them.

Sign the Show is my film. It's a creative and fun outlet for me, but it's also work, and I think that's what advocacy is. It has to be something you feel deep inside of you that you want to promote. It could be related to you, but it could also be related to someone else you know or an experience you've had. I am not Deaf and I don't have Deaf family members, but over the last seven years, I have made a lot of close Deaf friends. I am learning sign language; I'm by no means fluent, but I'm still learning. I'm still a student.

Finally, #HustleWithGratitudeAndLove. You have to advocate passionately for things. You have to speak up when you don't think you'll be heard or no one wants to see you. You have to continue to do so with gratitude and love in your heart. Not everyone will understand what you're doing or your passion, but you have to continue to hustle for what you believe in, regardless of what anybody else says.

I am going to ask you now, because I don't want it to be all about me. I'm the MC for the rest of the event so you'll hear me talk, but I'd love to hear from you what it means to be an advocate. I think that there is a poll that might be coming up for you all to take. I'd love for you to just take a second to answer, "What does advocacy mean to you?"

I'm not sure, Rebecca, how I'll know how everyone has taken the poll. There we go! It did pop up. It looks like 61%, an overwhelming majority, thinks it is publicly recommending or supporting a cause. Absolutely! It's also working hard and being true to yourself. It's advocating for something you believe in, whether or not your parents or friends believe in it. If you believe in it and it's in your heart, you must advocate for it. Part of that is absolutely caring about a cause.

You can see, the slide here is talking about an advocate is either a noun, a person who publicly supports or recommends a particular cause or policy, or it can be a verb, to publicly recommend or support an issue or cause.

My passion came about because of my love for live entertainment, for live music, for live comedy. Those are things that have gotten me through tough times in my life. Who doesn't like to laugh? Who doesn't turn on music sometimes to get you through a celebration or a sad

moment in your life? My passion for access, or accessibility to entertainment for the Deaf community came out of this.

When we asked you to register what you might have identified as your passion, some of those answers included "protecting water sources from pollution," "equal rights," and "Deaf and Hard of Hearing issues." We recognize that many of you are already advocates, but that doesn't mean it's the only issue you have to advocate for. If you are struggling with identifying an issue, we have a very special guest for you. That is Karen Putz. Karen is known as The Passion Mentor. She is the author of multiple books, including *Unwrapping Your Passion: Creating the Life You Truly Want*. She grew up hard of hearing and became deaf from a fall from waterskiing. At the age of 44, she took up the sport again. Today, she's on a quest to barefoot waterski in all 50 states!

I want to invite you all, to type, how many states do you think Karen has waterskied in? Add your guess to the chat. I'm hoping, because I'm on the edge of my seat, I'm hoping Karen is going to reveal this! Please join us in a round of applause to welcome Karen.

Karen Putz: Hello, everyone! I'm really thrilled to be here tonight, and we have one lucky person who got the actual number of states. 21! Yes. 21. The next state will be New York! We just moved here. The one after that will be Hawaii. So excited!

Let's move on to the next slide here. I'm going to start with my story. One more slide, please.

Rebecca Shanahan: Sorry. We're trying to get the yellow lines removed from the slides! Can you all see them?

Karen Putz: I'm good. My story starts with me being born with normal hearing. I can remember being able to hear as a young child. Growing up, I was really embarrassed about being hard of hearing. My only experience was with hearing peers. I was the only student in school who was Hard of Hearing and with a hearing aid. I grew up being very embarrassed.

If you asked me to advocate for myself, I wouldn't do it. I was just too embarrassed. I would much rather hide under the table than even consider advocating for myself. Everything changed one day. I was waterskiing barefoot, and I fell. When I climbed in the boat, I fell back. Becoming Deaf changed everything for me. First, it was a struggle. I was really upset and I cried. I was frustrated. One day I made a decision to embrace the journey of being Deaf. I started learning ASL. I met my husband, and we have three Deaf/Hard of Hearing children, and life is amazing. If you ask me today, would I advocate? Yes! For anything! I'm really passionate about advocating for causes, for equality, for access. It's an important thing.

As you see in that little picture, you can see me barefooting with an older woman. One second! I lost the interpreter. Okay! There we go. Perfect. Awesome.

There was an old lady, who was the one that got me back on the water at the age of 44, and I found my passion again. Let's go to the next slide.

Let me ask you guys. When you think of the word "passion," what does it mean to you? How do you define it? Go ahead in the chat, tell me what you think passion is for you.

Don't be shy! Type away! Passion is something that consumes your heart. Caring strongly about something. It's grit. It's something you care about. It's determination. Something you're enthusiastic about. Something that makes you fight hard. It's important to you. Caring. Putting effort into something. Amazing definitions.

I can tell you, I've interviewed over 200 people, and I would get 200 definitions of passion. The best definition I received came from a mom. She said to me, "Karen, passion is your joy. It's your joy." It's as simple as that. You know what brings you joy. You know it. It's within you. You know that. When you think of passion as joy, it's very easy to identify and see it happening in your life, and it's very easy to bring passion into your life, because we want to live with joy!

Next slide.

Okay. In studying this thing we call passion, there are five levels of passion. Some people have a huge amount of energy and passion, and other people maybe very little or almost none. I just couldn't figure out the difference. Why do some people find that energy and passion so quickly and easily, and other people do not? Then I discovered the five levels.

You see, passion starts at the basic level of "What are you curious about?" Advocacy started when you were curious about "why." Why doesn't everyone have, or why doesn't insurance cover hearing aids? Curiosity. When you start learning more and more about what you are curious about, you start exploring. The more you explore, the more you discover excitement, enthusiasm. You see where we're going? We're going up those levels.

The fourth level is that awareness. This is what I'm passionate about! "This is important to me." "This is something that I'm excited about." It's that awareness. "This is something I want to fight for!" Then you reach the top, which is the recognition level. Other people start recognizing your passion, and they see it. Next slide.

There's a surprising meaning behind the word "passion," and that's the willingness to suffer. If you are passionate about something and you want to advocate for something, you are willing to suffer for it. You're willing to drive three hours so that you can go to testify for something, or maybe a conference for a cause you believe in, or you write a letter to your senator or representative. You're willing to suffer and put in some work for what you are passionate about.

Next slide.

I wanted to share one lesson that I wish I knew when I was growing up. Remember, I told you I was embarrassed about growing up Hard of Hearing. I refused to advocate for myself or speak up. Instead of asking for clarification, I would laugh and smile and try to fit in. It hurt me and it hurt the other person, because the other person thought I was understanding everything. It hurt

me because I had no access. That laughing, trying to fit in? It didn't work.

Next slide.

That's the lesson I wish I knew when I was growing up. I wish I knew that, "Why are you trying so hard to fit in, when you were born to stand out." Each of us is unique. Being Deaf and Hard of Hearing has a layer of [inaudible.] We were born to stand out, not to blend in or fit in. We were born to shine.

Next slide.

Thank you for being here tonight. We're giving away one copy of *Unwrapping Your Passion* to one lucky winner!

Cat Brewer: If someone wanted to purchase your book, where could we purchase it?

Karen Putz: Okay. If you want to purchase the book, you can purchase it at any bookstore. Amazon, Barnes and Noble, etc.

Cat Brewer: Thank you so much. What an inspiring story. You can see here that there is another poll. We're going to ask you to take the poll, to click on the link, and fill in one word that you can. What are you passionate about? What are you passionate about? Please take a moment to click on the link. I think they're bringing it up now and putting it in the chat. If you can type in what you are passionate about.

Okay. I think maybe not everybody has completed it yet. Here we go. We're getting some more input. This is wonderful. Keep going! Keep adding in your word. You can put in multiple things if you have more than one passion. Feel free. It looks like some really important ones are coming up pretty big here. Equality, equal rights. I think that that is huge for everyone, but I also love the diversity of all of the different passions and causes that people want to advocate for. We don't all fit in one little box; we are all different, and there are so many different things that can be advocated for, especially once you find your passion.

At this point, I am going to turn it back over to Rebecca, who is going to moderate the Changemaker Showcase.

Rebecca Shanahan: Thanks, Cat. Thanks, Karen! I was impressed with the diversity as well. Great job, everybody. I'm excited about this next session that we've called our Changemaker Showcase. It's an opportunity for those of you on the call to really hear from some other veterans, some youth veteran advocates, as to how they got started. Maybe some of the challenges they have faced as they have begun their advocacy journeys, and have a conversation. It's my pleasure to welcome Megan and Noor. Tiana, unfortunately, had a conflict. We will follow up with her post-webinar and record an interview so you can hear how she started her advocacy journey.

Megan and Noor, welcome! I'm very excited to have a conversation with the two of you. We miss Tiana, but we'll follow up with her later. I would ask of the two of you, to start with a sentence that I've created and fill in the blank. The sentence is introduce yourself, and "I'm an advocate for," and fill in the blank with what your passion is and if you want to highlight the organization you advocate for. Megan, you go first.

Megan Dwyer: Hi. I'm Megan Dwyer. I'm an advocate for childhood cancer patients and their families through the American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network, Northern Nevada Children's Cancer Foundation, American Childhood Cancer Organization, and Children's Miracle Network.

Rebecca Shanahan: That's what I talk about amplifying your voice! Noor.

Noor Kafala: Hi everyone. I'm Noor Kafala, and I'm an advocate for Youth Nationwide with the Youth Advocacy Council.

Rebecca Shanahan: When I met you two, I thought those were pretty relevant issues, so thank you for your time this afternoon. Each of you came about your advocacy journeys kind of in a unique way, I would say. When we were visiting earlier, neither one of you had been impacted -- Megan, you're not a childhood cancer survivor. Noor, you have not started vaping or juuling, and you're not impacted by other tobacco-related diseases. Noor, how about you start and give us a highlight of how you chose tobacco as the platform you were going to advocate for?

Noor Kafala: Yeah. Like you said, I never had any experience with tobacco products. I've never found myself wanting to try them. I've always been told, "These are bad, don't try them." I didn't really go into advocacy for this specific topic, out of myself, wanting to know more about it, because I didn't know much about the topic. Honestly, I had the opportunity by chance. I got a flyer to join my local youth advocacy Council, and I thought it would be a great opportunity to be more involved in my community. When I joined, I started learning about the main goal of the Council, to try to ban smoking in multi-unit housing units in our community. I didn't know this was an issue, and once I learned more about it, I was really amazed, and I was like, "Wow, I didn't know about this, but now I want to fight for change." That's how I got into it.

Rebecca Shanahan: That's great. You saw an opportunity and went for it. Megan, talk to us about how you chose childhood cancer and all of the organizations that you're involved in.

Megan Dwyer: So I've always felt bad for sick children and their families. When I was 8, I joined a mentorship program and started raising money through Children's Miracle Network. I focused more on childhood cancer patients, because I realized there's a lack of funding for research towards childhood cancer, and I decided that was an issue that should change. I work with these organizations, because I'm attacking childhood cancer from so many angles. I have fundraising going, I work with advocacy groups, and I work with organizations that do patient and family support.

Rebecca Shanahan: Thank you. I know both of you are very busy, so thanks for your time this

afternoon. Megan, what would you tell yourself at the beginning of your journey? Maybe that you would do something differently? You started out, started exploring, and got involved in these organizations. Is there something you would have done differently?

Megan Dwyer: I would tell my younger self a word of advice to find more like-minded people to expand my personal network, because you can make a much bigger impact working as a team than on your own.

Rebecca Shanahan: So true. What is the saying? Teamwork makes the dream work? Noor, when you reflect on your advocacy journey, what has been your biggest challenge? You started out not knowing anything about advocacy. You started a flyer and decided to try it.

Noor Kafala: In the beginning, it was difficult going into the Youth Advocacy Council not knowing much. I had to go to online trainings to educate myself, so that when I would present at schools, I obviously know what I'm talking about! That was one of the biggest challenges in the beginning. Lately, since we're online, it's been hard to reach out to people. I feel like in the beginning of the pandemic, I would probably tell myself to do more events. I feel like we were hesitant about stuff and didn't take the opportunity to do a bunch of stuff.

Rebecca Shanahan: Yeah, when we look back on life in lockdown, there's lots of things we would have done differently, but we were all a little bit in shock and trying to navigate it.

For both of you, my next question is, "Who have you leaned on the most to help advance your advocacy? Is there someone or a group who has really kept the fuel in your fire?"

Oh. You're muted.

Noor: Personally, I've had a friend, Bella. We joined the Youth Advocacy Council the same year. She's a year younger than me, but we were in the same boat, joining a new experience. As we spent years in the Council, we were really able to get to know each other better. We've been able to present together and we're a really good pair to present at stuff when there's a conference or something. We remind and encourage each other. She is my co-chair of the Council, and working with her has been such a great opportunity to not only be a better presenter and advocate, but also a better person.

Rebecca Shanahan: Awesome. Let me pause real quick. We have a special guest that has popped into the webinar and has to pop back off. Really quickly, I would like to give a special warm welcome to Assemblywoman Selena Torres from the state of Nevada. Are you on?

Selena Torres: Yes! How is everybody doing?

Rebecca Shanahan: Hello!

Selena Torres: Thank you so much for accommodating me. We have a deadline today, so we're in and out of meetings on the legislative floor. I'm excited to be here!

Rebecca Shanahan: I know you have to bounce off. Do you want to do your section now?

Selena Torres: Yeah! I think I can go ahead and do my section. I'll just be a little late.

Rebecca Shanahan: Sure! Do you mind if we pause, Nora and Megan, after Assemblywoman Torres gives us an overview? Great. Legislature calls, so we'll keep moving. I'll advance the slides a little bit.

We have a whole program here, so this is running with event planning! Cat was excited to introduce the assemblywoman, but I'll do it really quick. Thank you for your time. For those of you who aren't familiar, Assemblywoman Torres is an educator and a Clark County K-12 teacher. I don't want to keep us too long, so I'll hand it over to you and let you do a little bit of educating for the people on the webinar!

Selena Torres: Thank you! I'm excited and you've had great presenters, so I'm excited to see so many phenomenal leaders in our community and so many phenomenal young leaders. It's great to see your commitment.

I'll go ahead and talk about the legislative process. The first portion is, who makes our laws? There are three branches of government, and I'm sure most of you have learned about these in school as well. I'll talk about the federal government, and how that will apply in your state government as well.

The executive branch is the President, who signs the laws. You have the judicial branch, which interprets the laws. They are the Supreme Court judges accepting cases. Then you also have the legislative branch, making the laws. That would be Congress and Senate.

In the state, your executive branch is the governor. Judicial is the state Supreme Court, and legislative is state representatives and your state Senate.

Rebecca Shanahan: I'm going right through!

Selena Torres: We'll talk about the levels of government first. Thinking about the levels of government, each state has a similarly-structured government, but there are key differences. In some states, maybe there's an assembly instead of representatives. Then you also have more local government, so you also have your county government, township government, school board, etc. Those are more localized governments.

So who would be the person that governs a city? What is the name of a person who governs the city? Put it in the chat.

Representatives in city government.

Rebecca Shanahan: Don't be shy!

Selena Torres: Perfect! You also might have your city Council, or towns-people. Things like that. Great job.

Our government are the people elected to represent us and help make laws. That can sometimes affect the entire United States, and sometimes they are more localized. As you begin your advocacy journey, it's important to be willing to make change and recognize where that might be made.

For example, at home when you turn on the water, the city officials are impacting your life. They're responsible for your water. Nevada has an interesting role with water! Nutrition. Making sure the food is safe and healthy, and making sure the state has regulations for access to food.

Transportation is impacted by state and local government, because they help maintain and build the roads you're driving on. When your child goes to school, they're impacted by almost every level of government: the school board, the regulations that your local schools are creating; your state and the policies your state has and how much they are funding. They're impacted by the federal government, which have additional regulations for the education system. There are all these layers of government that trickle down and impact us. That's why I'm so interested in policy, because I recognize that policy impacts every aspect of our lives.

Who is your lawmaker? I really encourage you all to look up who your legislator is and who your lawmaker is when you go home tonight. I guarantee you'll be able to reach out to them and have conversations about how you can create change in your community. Sometimes, I think we think a lot about the federal government, but there's a lot of impact that we as legislators have. Sometimes we have more direct impact on our community's lives, and I encourage you to reach out to your local representatives. Your local city and county government, etc. You can be involved and figure out how you can be part of the change in your community. It seems like there's already young leaders on the call who are key in their communities, so I have no doubt that there are more young leaders on this call.

I'll give you some examples of federal government. Every state has two senators. You'll see senator Cortez in purple. Obviously, we have the President, Joe Biden, and Congresswoman Sue Lee. For Congress, it's determined by population, so every state might have a certain amount of Congress people in their communities. Does anybody know what state has 53 representatives? Feel free to type it in the chat or unmute yourself. 53 is a lot!

California! Very good. California. Because it's the state with the largest population. Very good.

You'll also see state legislators. This is Joe Hardy in the middle, and myself on the right. I work for the Nevada State Assembly.

We also have more localized government. This is the Henderson mayor, Deborah March. On the right we have Commissioner Michael Naff.

Where do you learn more about your lawmakers? My understanding is that Grassroot Girls has an interactive toolbox on their site, so you can use that to be part of advocacy in your community. Another thing is to reach out to us. Natalia, if you don't mind putting my email in the chat, feel free to reach out to us. I want to find ways to empower leaders within our community.

Thank you for having me. I apologize for having to chime in the middle. It was really exciting to be with you.

Rebecca Shanahan: Thank you! Before we hop back into our Changemaker Showcase, since we're on the topic of the "who, where, and when," the students have created a poll. Would you speak to your local lawmaker in this scenario or your federal lawmaker, etc. Look at these poll questions. Take a couple seconds and we'll review them, and then we'll go back to visiting with Noor and Megan.

I'll go ahead and close the poll and pop the answers up, before the assemblywoman has to roll off. I'm impressed! It looks like -- yeah.

Selena Torres: I think most of them are correct. There's some overlap. #3 is where we have, talking about the polling location. You can start by reaching out to your local government. Secretary of State does oversee that. It's interesting, because even when there was more disagreement, you were both kind of right! This is awesome. It's awesome to see you so excited about policy-making. Please reach out and be part of the political process.

Rebecca Shanahan: Thank you! Get back to the floor and make some change happen. Thanks for your time!

Selena Torres: Thank you.

Rebecca Shanahan: Oh, I'm muted! It had to happen. That was unexpected. I think we should just go process that for a second. Go back to our chat with Noor and Megan, and do a brief summary of what you heard, and continue with our program. Is that good?

All right. Noor and Megan, I see you. Let's get back. Megan, I think it was your turn to be in the hot seat about who has been your biggest supporter, and who you've leaned on.

Megan Dwyer: My mom has definitely been pretty supportive of my different ambitions and passions, and making sure I could build my network. Currently, it's the Cancer Action Network Leadership Team. I recently joined a few months ago, and it's been awesome to kickstart my advocacy journey.

Rebecca Shanahan: That's an organization that is close to my heart as well, so welcome to the team! My last question, as you reflect on your advocacy journeys, share with the group one of your most proud achievements. A "win" you've had. We all know you will have a lot of setbacks,

but occasionally you'll get a win, and that will keep driving you in your advocacy journey. If you could both take the opportunity to share with the attendees, that would be great. Noor?

Noor Kafala: Sure. Let's see. Something that stands out to me is being elected the chair of the Youth Advocacy Council this year. I've been part of it for a while, and I've learned so much and it's been such a great opportunity. This year I had the opportunity to have this leadership position and share what I've learned with new and returning members of the Council. It's a great opportunity to organize the events we go to. It's honestly such a great opportunity, so that's one of my biggest achievements right now.

Rebecca Shanahan: All right, Megan. Your turn.

Megan Dwyer: One of my biggest wins was meeting childhood cancer survivors, because I know I'm making a difference. In my community alone, I have met four kids who were battling cancer. One of them, DeShaun, is a survivor. It's a big win for me to know that what I'm doing is making a difference.

Rebecca Shanahan: Well, I could talk to you guys a long time! If we had more time I could keep going on, but we don't. We rapidly went through Assemblywoman Torres' presentation. I'd like to briefly go through her slides, but in closing, I want to say thank you for the efforts you two are putting forth. You are inspirations and reminders, and you are coaches. I think that is something you have to be mindful of as you continue, because you are really inspiring other youth, both in your organizations and outside, to follow in your footsteps. Thank you for your time this afternoon. I look forward to catching up with you both more post-webinar and keeping in touch. Thanks, ladies.

All right. We have a little change in the program, because the state legislature called! I thought it would be worthwhile to briefly walk through what the assemblywoman shared with you. That was a lot of information, really quickly. To summarize, the point she was trying to make that is really critical in your advocacy journey is to understand which lawmaker you need to speak with to get the change and outcome you are asking for.

We have a great example of that, later on, with our Deaf advocate, Alexis Jones. I think it's really important that you all do go back after this webinar and do your homework. I guarantee many of your parents probably don't know who your lawmakers are. It's a great family exercise to dive into the advocacy toolbox on our website, and it will be included in a post-webinar email, and learn about the different levels of government and who represents you. If you want to put a stoplight at the corner of your street, for example, who do you talk to in order to make that change? If you want to do big asks, like what Noor and Megan are working on; they're going and asking the federal government for funding to fund research for cancer, or to pass laws so that youth cannot access vapes and jewels. Then you're going to talk to your federal lawmakers. It's very important that you understand how the process works, and it's really critical, both Noor and Megan had good examples of how they aligned themselves with organizations to help walk them through the process. That's where we'll go when we talk about amplifying your voice.

With that, I think, Cat, I'll just keep it, I guess! Events never go as you plan. I'm grateful for everybody's patience. We're going to talk a second about the last piece I highlighted, amplifying your voice. As you heard, Noor and Megan have partnered with large organizations, navigating the process. What are they actually asking for? That's kind of what we mean by "amplifying your voice." My question is, do you think it's more powerful to be the only person advocating for a change or cause, or would it generate more outcomes if 500 people were advocating for a change or cause? You can just type it in the chat.

Yeah. Of course, right? It doesn't take away from the experience that you have had, but what comes out of it are additional relationships and power. Power in your storytelling. There are many organizations across the United States that organize annual lobby days or annual advocacy days. These are typically about two days dedicated to influencing public policy and our laws. These take place, as Assemblywoman Torres was highlighting, at the state and federal levels. People from all across the country participate, and you share your passion and personal experience.

This picture is Capitol Hill in Washington, DC. This is where our laws are made and where our federal representatives convene to make the policies and laws that shape our lives. You can have a voice in that process.

I happen to be an advocate for pancreatic cancer with the Pancreatic Cancer Action Network. This is the Pancreatic Cancer Action Network's annual advocacy days. Every summer, pre-COVID, about 700 people gather to share their stories with lawmakers. We even have people from Alaska and Hawaii participate. We all share our stories as to how we have been impacted by this disease, and why it deserves federal dollars to help find a cure. I will share that one year I was out there, and we were behind one of the organizations for childhood cancer, and every meeting I went to, out came these amazing children who had been impacted by cancer. It was really hard to follow them, because you look at their faces, and you're like, just give them the money! So it's imperative you share your stories so you can make those changes.

Don't underestimate how a movement will start. With the Pancreatic Cancer Action Network, it started with one woman 20 years ago, and 20 years later, it's 700 people convening and sharing similar experiences.

This is what we do at Grassroot Girls. We empower young girls, such as yourselves and the young man on the call, to advocate for healthier lives, stronger communities, and a sustainable planet. We do this by connecting you with organizations that align with your passion. We break down financial barriers, so you can get to state and federal events to share your story. You can visit with lawmakers and meet hundreds of other advocates. At Grassroot Girls we provide travel scholarships to cover the airfare and hotel. Sometimes we'll include some for taking in the sites at your federal capital. It's really important to have support, and that's the community we have wanted to build. We're very excited to have extended our reach to the Deaf and Hard of Hearing community through Nevada Hands and Voices.

I have one fun video here.

[Video playing.]

Rebecca Shanahan: Maybe! There it goes.

[Music playing.]

Rebecca Shanahan: So those were a couple of Grassroot Girls in action, a couple of summers ago in Washington, DC.

Now we'll provide an example of advocacy in action. One person amplified her story and made an impact for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing community. It's my pleasure to introduce you to Alexis Jones, a straight-A student in the 8th grade. She's starting goalie and top scorer on her club soccer team. Alexis also happens to be Deaf. She failed her newborn screening but did not get an accurate diagnosis until she was four years old. She has been learning strategies to succeed and be a self-advocate. She has advocated for Deaf and Hard of Hearing issues with Nevada Hands and Voices not only for herself, but also her younger brother. She has testified at the Nevada legislature, not once, but twice, about Deaf and Hard of Hearing issues within our community. Lexi is going to share her experiences and give you steps in how to meet with your lawmakers. Welcome, Lexi.

Alexis Jones: Hi! My name is Alexis, but I also go by Lexi.

Rebecca Shanahan: Sorry!

Alexis Jones: I'm honored to be here to walk you through my experience and to share some tips on how to have effective meetings with lawmakers to ensure they hear you, and understand what you are asking for.

Four years ago, when I was researching about advocacy for Deaf and Hard of Hearing, I never thought I would be here today, testifying and giving tips on how to help others become more confident. Karen Putz is one of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing advocates I researched back then.

These are two pictures of advocacy in action. The first is of me testifying in the Nevada capital two years ago, and the second is of my younger brother Harrison. These are great examples on how advocacy works, in various ways. Next slide.

The first thing that your lawmakers will ask you, and if you forget they will remind you, is where you live. They want to know if you live in their state or district and if they need to win your parents' vote. You will not get a meeting if you're not a constituent. To be honest, I never heard that word before the presentation, because when I went to the Nevada capital in 2019, the group set up meetings for assembly members that didn't represent the district I lived in.

The next step in making an ask is sharing your story. Sharing your story is the most vital part in testifying. When I testified two years ago, I was still confused about the lawmaking process. I

didn't really know what was going on, but I knew the most important thing to do was share my story. It's your story. No one knows your story as well as you do. A parent can tell your story, but it's from their perspective. You don't have to know all the statistics in the world; just share your story.

Two years ago I shared my story on why I thought a state school for the Deaf was needed and why hearing aid coverage was needed. This year I shared the ways Deaf did not mean dumb, and I brought some to tears. This year I only testified virtually. A great tip is to have a picture of a loved one or some kind of visual.

This is a picture from 2019, when my family and another family with a son who is Deaf and Hard of hearing met with a legislator. My little buddy Evan and my brother -- hi Evan -- all shared what it's like to have a hearing loss. It didn't feel like a speech or fancy meeting. It just felt like a normal conversation.

Making the actual ask. Your ask might be something simple, like making November 14 National Childhood Cancer Day. In my case, I was asking for changes with coverage for hearing aids. Have a handout you can refer to, or simply share your story. That is the most important part of your meeting. Next slide.

Again, the most important part of your meeting is to share your story, but data to back it up will help. Let's be real. Homework sucks! Think about it like a research project at school. If you provide data, it will make your claim that much more powerful. If you're attending a well-organized advocacy day, they will provide data and handouts. If you can't remember the data, just tell them you have a packet of information that supports your requests.

My family is involved with Nevada Hands and Voices, which is an organization that provides help for families with children who are Deaf and Hard of Hearing. They provided the data and I provided my story. Next slide, please.

Lastly, before you go, remind them of your ask. That's it. You already shared your story and provided data. Also, include a leave behind. It can be your data or a photo of something. Don't forget to thank them for their time and to be respectful.

During my meeting with Senator Spearman, my leave-behind was artwork. I went through over 200 batteries for hearing aids a year. I found another purpose for them and incorporated them into a few of my favorite books. We put the data on the back of them. Senator Spearman photocopied my artwork and handed them out at the hearing. The perfect example of advocacy is by using the Charlotte's Web cover that I made with the hearing aid parts. With the right words, you can change the world.

We create a word reminder. It's what can be said. S is for your story. A is for ask. I is for information to support the ask, and D is to double down on the ask. Remember, your story is the critical piece, and the one thing they will likely remember.

As an advocate, my family and I have learned a lot by finding our passion and telling our stories. In 2019, we met with state senators and assemblymen. This year, as my family and I continue to advocate, people remembered us. Assemblywoman Titus [inaudible] can go a long way. Like my artwork says, with the right words, you can change the world. Thank you.

Rebecca Shanahan: Great job, Alexis. Thank you so much! I know I personally am very grateful to all of the presenters and participants who logged on this afternoon or this evening, if you happen to be on the East Coast.

We have one fun thing to do all together before we log off, but I want to hand it over to Cat first to see if she has any closing remarks. We had to shuffle our program a little, so I want to see if she has anything to add before we give our thank-yous and do our activity.

Cat Brewer: Thank you. I want to say I'm a teacher and I teach public speaking. Not that I am judging or grading any of you, but you all did such a phenomenal job. I'm just so inspired by everybody's story. Alexis, Noor, Tiana, Karen, I wish I had met you when I was first starting my film! I want to say that some of the stories that you girls are sharing remind me of two quotes, one by John Lewis, who said "Get into the trouble." As long as you disrupt things for a good purpose, that's important. That's what you all are doing. There's another quote by a man named John Wesley, who says, "Do all the good you can, in all the ways you can, in all the places you can, at all the times you can, to all the people you can, as long as you ever can." I'm so impressed with you young women who are advocating at such a young age. I really look forward to the future for all of you and the causes you are advocating for. Thank you for having me today.

Rebecca Shanahan: Thank you for your time, and thank you, Karen. I look forward to reading your book and your documentary! Thank you to Natalia, Assemblywoman Torres, Megan and Noor. Keep up the good work! Alexis, same to you. I know you're pounding the pavement every day.

I want to thank our interpreters, as well as Intellitext, who has been doing the live transcribing, which I hope worked out for all of you. I am going to stop sharing my screen here. Hopefully, if you're comfortable, and you want to turn on your camera, you don't have to, but we all want to learn to sign "I am an advocate." Mr. Sassman, Evan, I see you! He is going to teach us all how to sign "I am an advocate." Are you ready?

Evan Sassman: You do a simple "I" for I. Then make two fists. If you're left-handed, you do this for advocate. You put your right hand under your left. I mean --

Speaker: You take your dominant hand and move it to the non-dominant hand.

Evan Sassman: Right. I advocate. This just means I advocate. So let's add a person. I am an advocate.

Rebecca Shanahan: Is everybody practicing? I advocate person. All right! Let's all remember

that. Keep practicing. Grassroot Girls. Nevada Hands and Voices. We're all here for you as you continue or begin your advocacy journeys. Don't hesitate to reach out. Thank you again for your time this afternoon. Go out and do good in the world. Keep it up! Bye, everybody.

[End of webinar.]

***This is a meaning-for-meaning transcript designed to facilitate communication access and is not intended to be a verbatim record of proceedings. Thank you.*