

# Learn How to Be an Advocate

Ana Chavarin

**BEFORE YOU READ:** What is a legislator? Share what you know about what legislators do. If you were going to travel to Washington, DC, to speak to your legislator about funding for adult education, what would you want him or her to know?

When I was an adult basic education student at Pima Community College, I took the Adult Education Ambassador training. I learned how to advocate for funding for adult education. After my training, I took a trip to Washington, DC, to meet with legislators.

This trip to DC was very important to me for several reasons. First, I was representing other students like me. We have worked so hard to manage time and energy to be head of household and also go to school and pursue an education. I wanted to tell my story (and the stories of people like me) to our elected officials in DC. If they see our faces and hear our stories, they learn that we are more than just a line in the budget.

Second, as immigrants and as working parents, we have much to give to our new country, the United States. We want to better our lives and give back to the community. I wanted to make sure that the elected officials in DC looked at us as an investment and not as a burden to our economy. When congresspeople invest in education, they are investing in the whole community.

**AFTER YOU READ:** Write a letter to your state or federal representative. Tell your adult education story. Explain why funding for adult education is “an investment and not a burden to our economy.”

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Ana Chavarin is a former adult basic education student at Pima Community College in Tucson, AZ. In 2019, she finished her Associate’s degree at Pima Community College and has transferred to the University of Arizona to pursue a Bachelor’s degree in Psychology. She works as a community organizer with the Interfaith Council, and she still works at her original night-time job from when she came to Tucson in 2003 – cleaning offices.



Ana Chavarin (right) with other advocates (left) and Arizona federal representative, Tom O'Halleran, at the Capitol in Washington, DC.

## Attend the Training!

Every year at COABE, there is a full-day training for adult education students and teachers about how to be an Adult Education Ambassador. You learn background information about adult education, how to tell your story, public speaking skills, and how to plan and carry out meetings with elected officials. Students in 20 states have learned how to be “ambassadors” and have taken the training back to their state to teach others.

Are you interested in getting trained as an Adult Education Ambassador? Visit [coabe.org/student-ambassador](http://coabe.org/student-ambassador).