



## Tips on Writing a Letter to the Editor or Op-Ed Piece

### Tips on Content of Letter

- Make your letter timely. Address a specific article, editorial or letter that recently appeared in the paper, or tie the issue to a recent event.
- Focus your letter on one point, on one subject
- Be clear and concise. Shorter is better. Most papers want letters of 250 words or less.
- State your point early in the letter and support your point with facts and research, or at least a unique and compelling argument.
- Know the audience of the publication. Avoid overly technical language.
- If appropriate, mention your motivation or expertise in writing. For example, “As a health care provider/a parent/a patient... I believe... and therefore x...”
- If a publication receives multiple letters on the same subject, the editor will choose one that says something in a new way or takes a unique angle. Humor helps!

### General Logistical Tips

- Know and follow the policies and specifications of the publication to which you are submitting your letter. Except as noted, it is OK to send the same or similar letters to more than one publication. But don't submit the same or similar letters to multiple papers in the same media market.
- Always include your name, address, and daytime telephone number. Include exactly one e-mail address in the To: field. Don't send to editors via Cc: or Bcc:. Send your letter in the body of the e-mail message, not as an attachment. If you do not hear from anyone, contact the media outlet to confirm that they received your e-mail and that you sent it to the correct person.
- Don't submit a letter to a paper that has already run another of your letters in the past month or two.
- Don't ignore community newspapers; it is often easier to get published there. You can also contribute to online news sources.
- If your letter was published, get a print version of the letter with the front-page banner of the paper's name.
- Send your letter to your legislators with a personal note. Keep copies for future lobbying visits.
- Send a copy of the printed letter to the group that encouraged you to write or to the group that is working on your topic so that the organization can follow the bigger picture.