

## Writing an Effective Letter to the Editor

Writing a letter to the editor is another effective way to briefly respond to an article previously published, or to provide your opinion on a current issue. While an Op-Ed is often written about a broader issue, a letter to the editor is written as a response to an editorial or article. Anyone can write a letter to the editor, and a well written letter can help to inform and influence the public regarding issues that are important to or directly affecting you.

### Prepare to write

- Begin by referencing the article or issue you are writing about.
- Go on to explain how it impacts your community, and if possible include a personal experience.
- Close with the main point that you want the audience to understand after reading your letter.
- Include your name, address, phone number, and any relevant degrees that demonstrate your qualifications, a degree however is not required.
- Do not make personal attacks toward a reporter, editor, expert, or other individual
- Submit your letter as quickly as possible after the original article or hot topic to ensure that it's still relevant when published.
- If your letter does get published, send a copy along to your elected officials and relevant organizations, and share it on social media. Sharing it across various platforms will increase your number of readers and ensure that you are getting your message across.

### Tips for Writing a Letter to the Editor

- Be concise. Media outlets may have different requirements, but the general limit is 200 to 250 words.
- Chose one issue or concept and keep it simple, avoiding acronyms or jargon. Not everyone is an expert on your issue, so make sure it's easily understandable.
- Read some older letters published by your chosen media outlet to get a feel for what will resonate with readers.
- Make it relatable by explaining how it impacts your community. If you write to the *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, tie your concerns back to their impact on people living in Cleveland.

## Writing an Effective Letter to the Editor

### Sample Letter to the Editor

#### Short-Term, Limited-Duration Insurance Negatively Impacts Cancer Patients

I am writing in response to the current discussions surrounding the new proposed rule on short-term, limited-duration insurance plans. Although these plans were originally intended to be a gap filler for people who are looking for other coverage options, are between jobs, or temporarily without coverage, the proposed extension of short-term plan duration creates a serious problem. Patients looking for cheaper plans will fall victim to these short-term plans that will ultimately provide insufficient coverage, and ignore several important Affordable Care Act provisions, such as the protections for those with pre-existing conditions.

Pre-existing conditions are conditions that a patient may have already seen a doctor for, or received treatment, advice, or medication for, prior to enrolling in their current health insurance plan. The short-term plans have far-reaching, negative consequences because many individuals will enroll while they are seemingly healthy, but if they receive a diagnosis of any of the many medical problems not covered by these plans, they will likely find themselves without coverage and facing astronomical treatment costs.

I was diagnosed with a form of sarcoma cancer in 2016 at the age of 22. Luckily, I was still under my mom's insurance through the Affordable Care Act and was covered. When I had a recurrence about a year later, after I moved here to Washington, D.C., I was still able to reap the benefits of her coverage as I endured more surgeries and radiation treatment.

Other people are not so lucky when they're diagnosed with cancer. Some might be attracted by the allure of a more "cost-effective" short-term, limited duration insurance. Then, when they need coverage the most, they are diagnosed with a cancer that requires a great deal more than any short-term health insurance plan will provide.

I urge the Administration to reconsider the new proposed rule on short-term, limited duration insurance and take into account the devastating impact – both financially and health-wise – that the increase in these kinds of plans could have on cancer patients, or anyone else who may encounter an unexpected and costly diagnosis.

Sincerely,

Name, relevant degrees or qualifications, any organizational affiliation