



Letter to the Editor Toolkit

First person testimonials can be effective tools in raising awareness of important issues, such as the impact of viral hepatitis in your community. Letters to the editor (LTE) are short, concise articles that respond to and provide an opinion on a recent article, editorial, or event. Every newspaper has its own opinion-editorial section, which features a section dedicated to reader letters regarding current events. We encourage you to submit a letter to the editor in your local newspaper to raise awareness around the need for funding for viral hepatitis programs in your state. Below you'll find tips for writing an LTE, how to submit your letter, and a customizable sample letter about why you support funding for viral hepatitis.

Please reach out to info@nvhr.org if you need help customizing or submitting your letter.

10 Tips for Writing Letters to the Editor

- 1. Be Personal.**
Your unique viewpoint, experience, or story is more compelling than repeating general talking points. Explain why the issue matters to you.
- 2. Be Concise.**
Keep your letter short and adhere to the word limit stated in LTE guidelines. Shorter letters have a better chance for publication due to space constraints.
- 3. Be Specific.**
Focus your LTE on your primary argument or call to action. Most publications will edit for length, clarity and punctuation, but a distinct and clear message persuades better.
- 4. Be Factual.**
Support your arguments, and where appropriate add statistics. Publications will vary on how they want to receive the sources for information you cite, but generally include it separately from your letter.
- 5. Be Local.**
Unless you're writing to a large national publication (New York Times, Washington Post, etc.) letters about local issues or local leaders will generally take priority over national topics.
- 6. Be Relevant.**
Keep your commentary on timely issues and focus your LTE in response to recent articles and current topics.
- 7. Be Assertive.**
Include a call to action in your LTE. Calls to action can include urging legislators or the public to support a specific bill, inviting the public to call their legislator, or urging a specific action.
- 8. Be Informed.**
Read the current opinion page for your target publication to understand what types of pieces are accepted and published. Be true to your voice but keep your words civil, pointed, accurate, informative, funny and emotive.
- 9. Be Authentic.**
Sign your letter and include your address and phone number. Numbers will not be published but they will be used to verify the author.
- 10. Be Persistent.**
Newspapers receive hundreds of submissions, so you may be limited in how many LTEs you can author. Remember to follow up with the editor periodically after you submit the LTE.

Tips for Submitting Your Letter

Letters to the editor can help get your story to a broader audience, including influential community leaders. Here are some helpful tips to successfully get your story placed.

Search for weekly or daily newspapers in your area. TV and radio stations do not offer LTE opportunities, although they may have other public comment forums.

Read current LTEs and other guidance for submission. This will help you get a sense of the voices and opinions your preferred publication runs most frequently.

Follow all submission guidelines. Submit your LTE either via form or email. Follow up with the editor or listed contact to improve the likelihood of being published.

Sample Letter to the Editor

The time is now for [INSERT STATE]'s policymakers to commit to a comprehensive plan to eliminate viral hepatitis in our state by 2030, an ambitious goal set by the World Health Organization (WHO).

Viral hepatitis is an epidemic that impacts over 5 million Americans, and can result in liver cancer, liver scarring, and death. Yet, it is largely preventable through vaccination, testing, and treatment. Despite the existence of these tools, the United States is losing ground on the fight against hepatitis. New infections have spiked due to the ongoing opioid and stimulant use epidemics, while only 25% of adults are vaccinated against hepatitis B, and treatment rates for hepatitis C have declined between 2014 and 2020.

According to *Hep Elimination*, a project that grades jurisdictions' capacity to eliminate viral hepatitis, [INSERT STATE] received a [INSERT LETTER GRADE] for its current ability to reach the WHO's goal. Our state faces unique challenges and barriers to viral hepatitis elimination, which have been exacerbated by limited resources and the COVID-19 pandemic. We must find a way to address these challenges if we are to meet this critical goal.

We urge [INSERT STATE]'s policymakers to develop and fully fund programs that increase access to vaccination, testing, linkage to care, and treatment.

[NAME]

[AREA OF RESIDENCE]