

NORTH LOS ANGELES COUNTY REGIONAL CENTER

How To Write a Letter To Your Legislator

Did you know?

Letter-writing can have a tremendous impact on your state legislator's decision about whether to focus on or support certain issues. Short letters with personal stories are those most likely to be read.

Where do I begin?

- Identify your legislators
- A list of local legislators is available to you (NLACRC Local Legislators), or go to a site like www.vote-smart.org or www.congress.org. You can enter your zip code and it will give you the names of your representatives.

Write the letter

- Type or write legibly
- The first paragraph should say who you represent (if you represent an organization) and the issue that you are writing about. If you are writing about a specific bill, include the bill number at the beginning of the letter
- Keep the letter to one page or less
- Use your own words as much as possible, rather than a form letter or photocopied letter
- Give your best reasons for why a legislator should support or oppose a bill or issue
- Include a personal story
- Be courteous and reasonable
- Double check your spelling and grammar
- Include a newspaper article or editorial that supports your view
- The closing paragraph should repeat what you want from your legislator, ask for a reply regarding their position on the issue, and thank them for their time and consideration

Be sure to

- Sign your letter
- Include your full name and address

Remember that you can make a difference! We hope that you find these tips useful.

SAMPLE LETTER

(Here's an example to show how a letter can be written to a legislator.)

Date

The Honorable (name of legislator)
California State (Senate or Assembly/House of Representatives)
State Capitol Building Room ____
City, State, Zip Code

Dear Senator/Assemblyperson/Representative (Last name):

My name is Jane Smith (your name) and I am a consumer [a family member of a consumer/ a service provider/ an advocate/ community member]. As a Californian, I strongly urge you to raise the average wage of Direct Support Professionals to \$30,000 per year. These professionals typically play a surrogate family role, providing needed after-hours care, interventions, and basic emotional support to persons with developmental disabilities. There are insufficient numbers of qualified professionals to meet this need as more staff leave their positions to find better paying jobs.

[Add your own personal comments about why this issue is so important to you. Keep it brief.]

Please do not compromise the health and safety of the over 200,000 Californians with developmental disabilities. The rights and services needed by our state's most vulnerable people are in your hands.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely yours,

Your full name
Your address