



## Letter to the Editor (LTE) Toolkit

This Letter to the Editor (LTE) Toolkit aims to give hematologists guidance on how to influence policy makers, local leaders, and individuals in their communities through timely and well-written letters published in media outlets. While LTEs are primarily thought of as being found in the opinion section of your local print newspaper, they are also published on digital news websites.

This toolkit includes insights on why you would write as a hematologist, why your voice will make a difference, and provides tips and tricks to develop your own letter. At the end of the toolkit, ASH provides a basic template for one type of letter, which you can alter to fit your own voice.

If you are interested in submitting an LTE and would like additional support in reviewing or pitching your piece, you can contact ASH Communications staff at [newsroom@hematology.org](mailto:newsroom@hematology.org).

### What is an LTE?

An LTE is short, usually 100-300 words, offering a distinct perspective or opinion in response to a recently published news article, editorial, or opinion piece. An LTE can be published online, in print, or both — varying by publication.

### How LTEs Can Make a Difference

An LTE can elevate and bring attention to an issue of importance to the wider community. Critically, Congressional offices keep tabs on their local community, monitoring local news outlets to see what's getting attention and what opinions are being expressed. As representatives of the state or district, they are interested in hearing from their constituents. Clearly expressed opinions from constituents — particularly those that highlight the impact of something in the community — can influence how lawmakers ultimately vote on any given matter.

As health care providers, you are thought leaders in the community. You bring an important perspective and can highlight important issues in medicine and medical research. People are always interested in knowing how their health could be affected, and a local doctor and/or researcher can make the connection between what's happening in Washington and what it will mean for their community.

### How to Submit a LTE

The process for submitting an opinion piece will vary from publication to publication. Each outlet has its own criteria for opinion pieces, which you should review before drafting your piece.

It's helpful to have a few key pieces of information before submitting:

- **Word Count:** Some outlets have strict word count requirements for LTEs. They typically range from 100-350 words.
- **Submission Process:** Outlets may provide a form to submit your piece, while others require you to pitch it to an opinion editor.

- **Frequency or Exclusivity:** Most outlets will not republish a letter that you submitted to another outlet, and they may also have specific requirements about how often you can submit a piece to them.
- **Other Requirements:** Most outlets will require a full name, location, and contact information for anyone submitting a piece for identity verification purposes.

## Top 10 Tips for an Effective Letter-to-the-Editor

1. **Know the rules.** Many newspapers and other media outlets have guidance (generally available online) for letters to the editor — whether in terms of word count, format, or insights on how a letter might be selected for publication. Check to see if the publication has such guidance and follow it. It's helpful to review LTEs the outlet has previously accepted during this process. Some outlets may provide a form to submit your piece, while others require you to pitch it to an opinion editor.
2. **Make the connection.** Outlets are only going to consider publishing your letter if you're writing in response to one of its recently published articles (including opinion pieces/editorials) or a significant current event. You may need to cite the specific article (headline and publication date) in your letter, though some outlets will ask you to link it. If it's a major current event (like cuts to NIH research funding), make the local connection. Share how your state will be affected, which can look like lost jobs or poorer medical care. A random opinion, not tied to its content or coverage area, is very unlikely to get attention.
3. **Include your contact info.** A responsible media outlet wants to confirm it's dealing with a legitimate letter writer, so include your full name, address, and multiple ways for it to get in touch with you, such as email address and phone number. You should check your home institution's media policies, as there may be additional guidelines or standards you should adhere to if listing your affiliation.
4. **Make note of your expertise.** If there's an article, for example, about sickle cell disease and you're a hematologist who treats patients with the disease, make that clear. Your expertise gives your letter more authority and relevance.
5. **Data and facts matter.** It's easy to have and share an opinion. Offering reliable data and well-sourced facts can take your letter to another level, lending it more credibility.
6. **Personal stories resonate.** As valuable as data can be, there's no denying the power of storytelling. Do you have personal experience with the matter, ideally something that relates to a patient? Are you a researcher who is feeling the impact of federal funding cuts? A powerful letter to the editor engages the mind — and the heart.
7. **Be original.** Don't use artificial intelligence to draft your letter. Media outlets can use tools to screen out such contributions. Also, don't send the same letter you've sent to other outlets. If your letter reads like a generic template or "rinse and repeat" message, it's unlikely to get far.
8. **Don't just criticize.** If you disagree with the point of a recent article or editorial, say so. But don't stop there. Make *your* case and advance the conversation. Perhaps there's a solution to share or a fresh insight to bring to the table.



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9. **Get to the point.** Media outlets may have their own word count limits, but a good rule of thumb is that shorter is better. Don't say in 600 words what you can say in 300.
10. **Share your published letter.** If your letter does get published, please share it on social media so that more people will see it, and don't forget to tag ASH in your post and use the hashtag #Fight4Hematology so we can help to amplify it!

### LTE Examples

The below links are a few examples of how researchers/providers have framed their concerns regarding recent government changes to their local papers.

- [Indy Star: CDC layoffs hurt Indiana residents with sickle cell disease](#)
- [Atlanta Journal Constitution: Cuts at CDC birth defect center will harm millions](#)

### LTE Template

While you want to be original in what you write, the following template might help frame a piece in response to funding cuts to a federal department or agency dealing with health care and/or research. You can use this template, which focuses on cuts to the National Institutes of Health, in drafting and customizing your own letter. If you need assistance drafting an LTE, please contact [newsroom@hematology.org](mailto:newsroom@hematology.org).

As a hematologist and researcher, I'm deeply concerned that the funding cuts to the National Institutes of Health (NIH) as proposed by Congress would devastate the nation and the health of [STATE]. Historically, NIH has supported foundational research that has led to medical discoveries that not only save lives but spur economic growth and technological innovation.

*[INSERT THE "WHY" STATEMENT SUPPORTED BY EXAMPLES – We've provided a couple different angles/statements to choose from and suggestions for examples to use in support of your argument. As space will be limited, you'll probably need to focus primarily on one angle that you are best able to speak to.]*

**Option 1:** I've seen firsthand how NIH-funded research has led to breakthroughs that have transformed the care of patients with blood diseases. For example, *[INSERT PERSONAL ANECDOTE – This could be about a patient you once treated, your personal experience, or your own research, but it should illustrate the importance of NIH research and how it has helped. Some examples could include cures for pediatric leukemia, increased lifespan of sickle cell disease patients, or revolutionary treatments in bone marrow transplant and personalized medicine. If talking about a specific condition, you may need to add details about what the condition is and its incidence.]*

**Option 2:** Investments in NIH help support jobs in universities, medical schools, drug manufacturers, and the thousands of businesses large and small that support them.

**[REFER TO ASH'S [CUSTOMIZED FACT SHEET FOR EACH STATE FOR STATISTICS](#)]:**

According to United for Medical Research, a coalition of research institutions and health advocacy groups, [STATE] has benefited from NIH research. It receives \$X.X million per year, which supports YYY jobs.



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**[OR, YOU CAN USE NATIONAL STATISTICS]:** In FY 2025 alone, NIH research contributed to more than \$94.15 billion in new economic activity and nearly 390,863 jobs.

Such funding preserves important medical advances, now and in the future.

As Congress begins consideration of the FY 2027 budget, we must urge **[INSERT NAME OF YOUR CONGRESSIONAL REPRESENTATIVES]** to support continued funding level of at least \$51.303 billion for NIH's base budget. This funding level would allow for meaningful growth that would expand NIH's capacity to support promising science in all disciplines. - **[NAME, institution], [City & State]**

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