

Write a Letter to the Editor

Letters are still one of the most widely read sections of the local news, and a great way to get your voice heard by members of your community and elected leaders on key issues of the day. Below are some **tips for successful letters to the editor** and **messaging that you can draw from** in writing a letter to the editor to spur action that provides stronger protections and higher quality care for residents of long-term care facilities.

TIPS ON WRITING LETTERS TO THE EDITOR (LTE's)

- Personalize your letter. Explain **your connection to the issue or why you care**. Share a **fact, personal story, experience, state or local specific data, or what you know to be true**. If there was a recent article in your local paper about nursing homes, you can also reference that article.
- Include a **“call to action”** - what do you want your audience (the readers/your community/policymakers) to know or do? **Name your local elected representatives and/or Members of Congress** and tell them they must take action to ensure the important reforms are implemented.
- LTE's have strict word limits. While they vary from paper to paper, generally you have a better chance of having your letter published if it is around **150 words, and no more than 200 words**.
- Include your **name, address, and phone number** when submitting your letter by email or in the mail. LTE's are about getting **local perspectives** (don't send a letter to a paper in another state or even a city that you don't reside in unless you are writing to a national paper like the New York Times).

SAMPLE LETTER TO THE EDITOR

To the editor,

Re: “National Guard to staff nursing homes” Jan. 31, the tragic truth is that even without a global pandemic, many residents in long-term care homes experience prolonged isolation, sometimes even neglect and abuse. Homes are chronically short-staffed and increasing facility ownership by for-profit companies are putting profits over people.

My mother was lucky to survive COVID-19 that spread like fire in her memory care home, but many did not. If anything positive can come out of this pandemic, it's the spotlight it put on the need to improve the wellbeing of our most vulnerable family members.

A minimum staffing standard for nursing homes will literally save lives. It will improve staffing, oversight, and accountability, and most importantly the quality of care our loved ones deserve and expect. It's tragic that it took a pandemic to get action to hold providers accountable for how they spend billions of taxpayer dollars, but I urge Congress to step up and provide the funding needed to ensure this standard is implemented fully.

Kristin Hyde, Seattle, WA

