



# Health Voices For Clean Air

How to use your unique medical or public health perspective to influence decision makers and educate community members about the health-harming impacts of air pollution, especially on children's health.

## To Get You Started



With over 16 years of working closely with health professionals on air pollution and advocacy, these are a few of our trusted resources on being a health advocate for clean air.

**The American Academy of Pediatrics** has a page dedicated to climate change that hosts a wealth of educational resources for health professionals — including latest health research, advocacy guides and talking points.

**Climate For Health** is a national network of health professionals offering tools, resources, and communications to demonstrate visible climate leadership, inspiring and empowering health leaders to speak about, act on and advocate for climate solutions.



**AirNow** or a similar real-time air pollution report, will keep you updated on current, local ground-level ozone and particulate matter. This is a great resource to share with patients!

**Five Modes of Science Engagement** by Roger Pielke will help you navigate the divide between the scientist-practitioner and the advocate roles.



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## Advocacy Tools



Here are a few examples of ways we've worked with health professionals to share their expertise.

We encourage you to choose options that appeal to your natural abilities and skill sets, and remember, this list is not exhaustive!

**Attend** public meetings

**Develop** organizational policy statements

**Join** the Healthy Air Alliance Of The Southeast to network with other health professionals in your region

**Meet** with decision makers

**Participate** in interviews with the media

**Provide** expert testimony

**Share** air pollution resources with your clients, students, or colleagues.

**Sign** on to medical professional letters

**Write** a letter to the editor or an opinion editorial



Grand Round training for residents at Moorehouse School of Medicine on air pollution, climate, health and advocacy



# Health Voices For Clean Air

## Learn The Lingo

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### **Advocacy**

Advocacy is a term that involves identifying, embracing and promoting a cause.

### **Amendment**

An amendment is a change to a bill or motion, sometimes replacing the entire bill. An amendment is debated and voted on in the same manner as a bill.

### **Bill**

Legislation drafted for consideration by the legislature.

### **Committee**

A group of legislators that develops legislation on specific topics and has jurisdiction over all legislation that deals with its topic.

### **District**

The district is the geographic area from which an official is elected.

### **Hearing**

A hearing is a meeting or a session where evidence to support particular viewpoints can be presented to a committee or regulatory agency. A hearing occurs when considering a specific bill, conducting an investigation, evaluating a government department's activities, or exploring topics of interest.

### **House**

Also known as the House of Representatives it is the lower body of the Congress and most state legislatures. Elected members represent a geographic district.

### **Lobbying**

Lobbying is a special form of advocacy with the purpose to educate lawmakers and influence legislation.

### **Senate**

The Senate is Congress's upper body. Each state has two U.S. Senators, elected at-large, to serve six-year terms.



## Share Your Story



Storytelling is one of the oldest and most powerful forms of communication. Crafting a clear, compelling story that elicits a call to action involves these tips from Resource Media.

### Telling a very quick story

even a couple of sentences –about a real-life example or experience can help turn your “message” into a memorable anecdote that will aid your audience in understanding, remembering, and passing on your ideas.

### Stories Need Characters

To come alive, stories need threats or “villains,” and a message of hope, or “hero.” The “villain” might be a threat like ozone, diesel trucks, climate change or power-plant pollution, or even a disease itself. The “hero” might be the people in your audience, whose actions can reduce the risk presented by the “villain.” Or the “hero” could be the person who first helped you understand the role of air quality in human health.

### Setting

The setting is both the time and the place where a story’s action unfolds, and it helps to ground your story, to make it real for your audience. A story involving a patient with asthma could take place in the emergency room, for example, or on a playground on a hot day. Either setting offers the opportunity to tell a story about the relationship between asthma and air quality.

### Conflict

All compelling stories need this element, though the word “conflict” can be a bit misleading. It means that there is a challenge, or obstacle that must be overcome. This challenge can be personal, political or scientific. Call it tension. A good story is not flat or static, it has emotion.



Clean air is important because health is important. How can we live healthy lives and breathe in pounds of pollution daily? We can't. In addition, I see many kids come to the ED, in hospital and even lose their lives because of severe asthma, low birth weight and cancers. All of which can have less severe consequences if we promote clean air.

My hope is that we can educate persons about the consequences of air pollution and the drastic effect it can have on their health. Ultimately, we can lead a powerful mission to influence our family, friends, state, country and the world in an effort to make a change. Not just for us, but for our kids and for the future.

- Dr. KJoy Simms



## How To Write A LTE

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A Letter To The Editor (LTE) is a great way to express your thoughts and feelings to a broad audience. They can be found in an editorial section or the front section of a newspaper or a magazine.

### Why Write A Letter To The Editor?

You write a letter to the editor because you...

- Feel strongly about an issue or cause and want other people to know about it
- Educate the public about an issue or cause
- Persuade the public, groups, or policymakers to take action on an issue or a cause
- Recruit others to help with your organization's programs and services

### When to write a letter to the editor?

You can write a letter to the editor

- Anytime that you want to express your thoughts on an issue
- Educate the public about an issue
- Persuade others to take action on an issue
- Promote a program or service by generating awareness on a issue or cause.

### How To Write A Letter To The Editor

#### Timing is everything!

While you can write a letter to the editor anytime, doing so in conjunction with a bill or a major issue will increase your chances of getting it published.

#### Concise

Many papers have word limits for their letters to the editor.

#### Get to the point

Grab the readers' attention immediately by use a clear main point, followed by two to three supporting points.

#### Check your facts

Check the accuracy and source of any quotes, studies, literature that you cite in your letter to the editor.

#### Make it local

Focusing on an issue that readers are more likely to relate to will increase likelihood of their taking action.

#### Call to action

Close your letter with specific call to action for the reader.

## Your Expert Opinion

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An opinion editorial (op-ed) is an essay in a newspaper or magazine that expresses the writer's opinion. Op-ed's are written by local citizens, leaders, experts, or anybody who has expertise in a particular topic.

This is your opportunity to showcase your expertise on a particular issue! If you can do this very clearly and persuasively, then you can change people's hearts and minds on a particular issue and help shape public policy.

### Connect With Your Readers

Using an anecdote in your op-ed can make listeners laugh or think about the topic that you are writing about.

### Stay Current

Stay up-to-date with the latest news headlines on your topic.

### Use active voice

Remember...this is your opinion, write in the first person when expressing it. It is easy to understand.

### Keep it simple

Avoid using jargon and keep your writing clear and concise.

### Respect Your Reader

While you want to use simple, clear, and concise writing, be mindful not to underestimate your reader's intelligence or their knowledge about the topic. It is your goal to grab their attention and make a compelling argument.

### Finish on a strong note

End by urging the reader to take action on the issue that you have addressed.

For an excellent example of an opinion editorial, check out the one written by Pediatric Pulmologist, Dr. LeRoy Graham. Find it on our website, under XXX



## Meaningful Meetings

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Face to face meetings are one of the most effective ways to advocate for your cause. Whether meeting with your local, state, or national elected official or collectively with others, the following tips can help make it a successful, productive meeting.

### Schedule The Meeting

- Be clear in stating the purpose of your meeting. The elected official may not be available to meet with you. Ask to meet with the Chief of Staff or the staff person assigned to the issue that you are advocating for.
- Be flexible with scheduling meeting times, the best times are when congress or the legislature is not in session.
- Plan for 15 to 30 minutes meeting time.

### Prepare for the Meeting

- Research what he/she cares about. What bills he/she have sponsored/supported.
- Learn what committee he/she serves on.
- Learn what their constituents are about.
- Bring local statistics and facts on the issue that you will be discussing during your meeting.



### Meeting Etiquette

- Arrive early.
- Be polite and address him or her respectfully by the correct title.
- State the purpose of your visit.
- Make it local.
- Ask your legislator what his/her position is on the issue.
- Listen, respond, and don't argue.
- Wrap-up the meeting.
- Thank the legislator for his or her time. Let him or her know that you're available for additional questions and that you will be following up.
- Leave something behind – a business card and position paper.
- Follow up with a note that includes the date you met, the issue you discussed, a restatement of your position and your understanding of the legislator's position.



## Expert Testimony

Hearings are open to the public to obtain opinions and information on proposed legislation or regulation, conduct an investigation or evaluate a government department's activities.

It is an opportunity to further explore current topics of interest. As a concerned citizen, you have the opportunity to speak directly to elected officials.

### Preparing to Testify

- When drafting your speech, keep in mind that most hearings have a time limit. A rule of thumb is that you can speak an average 125 words per minute.
- Arrive early and sign in for the meeting or session that you wish to testify.
- Write out your testimony and use this information to develop concise talking points. You can distribute copies of your testimony to committee members.
- Practice! Practice! Practice!

Dr. Zuberi, a pediatrician, completes his testimony before the EPA on the importance of cleaning up carbon pollution.

### Testifying

- Introduce yourself to the sponsoring group/committee chair. State the purpose of your testimony.
- Give clear and concise testimony. There may be many witnesses waiting to present and you may be asked to present in a group.
- Try not to repeat the testimony given by previous witnesses.
- Be prepared to answer questions from committee members.
- Be prepared to modify your testimony if a bill's sponsor offers an amendment, which could change your position on the bill.







# Health Voices For Clean Air

Together, we can protect  
children's health from air pollution.



For more information, please visit:  
[www.mothersandothersforcleanair.org](http://www.mothersandothersforcleanair.org)



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