



Prevention Justice Partnership

Using a sign-on letter/consensus statement in an issue campaign

The success of an advocacy campaign can be measured by the final outcome: Whether or not a policy you champion is created or changed in your favor. One way to influence the policy maker's decision is by demonstrating a broad base of support for your issue. A well crafted and executed sign-on letter or consensus statement is an effective way to show that support. Following are some tips on how to get the most out of this advocacy tool.

Drafting the letter

- Make sure the letter is addressed to the person who has the power to give you what you need. Use an appropriate tone for the situation.
- Briefly and concisely state your issue in the first paragraph.
- Provide relevant background on the issue, including any statistics, recent developments, historical trends, and any research that support your position.
- Propose concrete solutions or clear demands that are within the power of the addressee to provide.
- Close the letter with a request for further discussion or a meeting, include your contact information.
- If you are working in coalition with others, give ample time and circulate a draft of the letter to ensure key perspectives and concerns are included.
- Keep the letter to one-page in length. This will help focus your issue and increase the number of people willing to sign on.

Gathering endorsements

- Make a contact list of influential individuals and organizations that you want endorsements from. Decide before hand, based on the issue, if the letter is for organizational endorsements, individuals, or both. Plan on collecting a lot more names if individual endorsements are more effective for the issue. Aim to not only get as many supporters to sign on as possible, but also demonstrate wide support across different categories. (e.g. physicians, various types of service providers, clients, family members, researchers, professors, community leaders, etc.)
- Set a deadline for endorsements. Allow at least two weeks to circulate the letter. If the issue is controversial or if you need large organizations' support, allow at least one month for approval by board members.

- Have a short but compelling request statement ready for your pitch, either by phone or in writing/email. Don't go into the details of the issue, this should be articulated by the letter itself. Instead call attention to the problem, provide a solution, and introduce the letter.
- Send the request for endorsement out widely. Ask people to forward it to their contacts. If you are doing this by email, include the letter at the end in the body of your email message, don't send it as an attachment unless they specifically request it.
- Have a central collection point for endorsements. Include a form to gather contact information from the endorsers. List all the information you need by line, or people won't provide it.

Example:

To endorse this letter, please provide the following information and send it to endorse@myorg.org

Organization:

Name:

Title:

Address:

City/State/Zip:

Phone:

Email:

- Entered the information into a simple database program such as Excel, this will help you document your supporters and make the final sorting and listing of endorsers easier.
- Make follow-up calls or send email reminders one week before the deadline.

Sending the letter

- List the endorsers in an order that makes sense for the target (e.g. geographical for elected officials, or alphabetical by organization and/or last name.)
- Send copies of the letter to other people who may have influence over your target.
- Post the final letter to your website and send it to all the endorsers, keep them updated on any response you may receive.
- Depending on the issue, sending a press release to media outlets along with the letter can help bring public attention to your issue.

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