

Write a Letter to the Editor (LTE)

Submitting an LTE to your local newspaper is a great way to raise awareness about global vaccines and get the attention of your representatives when you set up meetings.

We are eager to support you in your writing process. If you need additional help, contact our communications team at media@shotatlife.org. We are happy to help you as little or as much as you would like, whether that is with the drafting or editing process. Even if you don't need our help with your LTE, please make sure to report your action (shotatlife.org/report) once you submit it and again if it is published.

Below is a helpful outline to help you get started!

- **Introduction: Present the issue**
 - 1.5 million children still die each year of vaccine-preventable disease
 - One in five children around the world still lack access to basic vaccines
- **Personal connection: add a personal or community connection to the issue**
 - Have you or a family member suffered from a vaccine-preventable disease?
 - Do you work or know someone who works in an area that puts them at higher risk? (ie; Peace Corps, military, health professions)
 - Has your occupation or previous travel allowed you to see firsthand the ways in which communities without access to vaccines are affected?
 - What motivates you to advocate for Shot@Life?
- **Statistics: Use data to support your argument**
 - By expanding access to existing vaccines, we can save a child's life every 20 seconds
 - For every \$1 spent on immunizations, the world sees \$44 in economic benefits
 - Funding for global vaccine programs is significantly less than 1% of the U.S. federal budget
- **Contextualize your argument: Connect Shot@Life's mission with the COVID-19 pandemic**
 - Strong health systems are critical to global preparedness for disease outbreaks. Investing in routine immunization, primary health care, and community health workers bolsters a nation's ability to prevent, detect, and respond to infectious disease. Stopping a disease at its source, before it can spread, not only saves lives but is also more economical
 - Those most at risk of developing severe illness from COVID-19 are older people and people with pre-existing conditions. The stress we feel during this outbreak is comparable to the daily stress of medically vulnerable people when we fail to achieve population-wide immunity for vaccine-preventable diseases like measles.
 - The current pandemic underscores the need for robust funding for global child vaccine programs that Shot@Life advocates for through CDC and USAID.
- **Conclusion: Compel readers and policymakers to act**
 - Be sure to mention your members of Congress by name and title, and ask them to fully fund global childhood immunization programs in the federal budget.
 - Remind your readers that an outbreak anywhere is a threat everywhere; we all have a stake in keeping our children and our communities safe.

- Let policymakers know that expanding vaccine access is not only beneficial to country economies, national security, and global stability—it's also the right thing to do.

Be sure to be mindful of wordcount limits when you submit your LTE—check the guidelines for your news outlet.

Sample LTE

Check out this sample piece from our Virginia Champion Leaders, Janice and Lukia, with some helpful annotations to highlight key elements of a successful LTE. This example was published in *The Virginian-Pilot* during our 2019 Race to Erase. Annotations are in green and italicized.

Vaccines Save Lives (*simple but gets your attention title*)

Today is World Pneumonia Day. (*She made it timely, connected it to a current event*). As a pediatric nurse practitioner (*she used her nursing credentials to assert herself as an authority on the subject, or at least as someone who has reasonable knowledge and interest in the topic*), I have been an advocate for vaccinations for children for the past 20 years (*made it personal*). While my expertise (*you don't have to be an expert, you can say 'As a nursing student, I've learned' or 'As a parent of a sick kid' or 'As a health care consumer' or 'As someone who recently had pneumonia'*) has focused on protecting children in the United States, the impact of vaccinating children globally cannot be understated (*connect local to global or micro to macro here*).

My recent participation in the United Nations Foundation's Shot@Life Campaign has broadened my lens as a healthcare provider and nursing leader (*or parent who vaccinates or neighbor of a kid who once had measles—there are lots of ways to be an expert*). One-and-a-half million children die each year from vaccine-preventable diseases, and eradicating vaccine preventable disease worldwide (*support with the evidence/facts/literature*) has become a top priority for me. National health safety and security must be a top priority for all of us, and children in Virginia will certainly benefit from expanding our vaccinations efforts beyond U.S. borders. (*bringing it home again, micro to macro, macro to micro*).

Unvaccinated children disproportionately live in fragile countries, and one in five children around the world still lacks access to basic childhood vaccines. By increasing access to existing vaccines, we can save a child's life every 20 seconds. (*the facts*)

I encourage all members of Congress to support access to vaccines for all children. (*the ask, what do we want*)

Lukia Beverly, Portsmouth (*Name and address required, but they only publish the city*)

(*Limited to 250 words per Virginia Pilot Rules*)

For more examples of published LTEs, visit <https://shotatlife.org/media/>.