

# Format for Letters to the Editor for The 5% Campaign

- **First Paragraph:** Start off your letter in a way that will catch the reader's interest – use a startling fact, raise a question, or make a strong statement about a serious problem.
- **Middle Paragraph(s):** Share portions of your story that grab the reader. Make a pitch for a five percent increase in funding for community services, and explain how it will help you and your family.
- **Final Paragraph:** Sum up what was said in the rest of the letter, draw a conclusion from what you've written, or call on legislators and/or the Governor to take action (e.g., to support the 5% increase).



## ***Sample Letter for Parents and Family Members***

To the Editor:

Poverty wages for professional work. That's what staff members receive for the demanding jobs they perform that enable my son to create a life for himself in our community. Increasing the funding for his disability services should be a high priority for the 2014 Legislature.

My son has autism; his needs are significant. He requires support to get ready in the morning, to stay focused at his work place, and to navigate events and activities in the community. Because of those services, he is able to live in his own place, succeed at his job, and enjoy his favorite beverage at the local coffee shop (hot chocolate with a huge dollop of whipped cream).

The state will come out with its economic forecast later this month. At times, state legislators and the Governor have used these forecasts to project how much funding should be cut from state budgets. Inadequately funding my son's services makes it difficult to retain quality staff and threatens his accomplishments that few people outside of our family thought possible. A five percent increase will help ensure the quality of his services and help him maintain the life he has created.

Sincerely,  
Name  
Address  
City, State, Zip

## ***Sample Letter to the Editor for DSPs***

To the Editor:

As a Caregiver/Direct Service Professional (DSP), I have been providing care to some of the most vulnerable adults in Minnesota for many years. I provide all sorts of services and take care of others' loved ones like they are my own. For the last few years, however, both my colleagues and I have been struggling trying to keep up the same level of care despite numerous cuts to home and community based services. The result, unfortunately, is that it always comes down to us to do more with less.

It is often soul-destroying and leaves me re-evaluating my career when I hear about cuts to services, and I know that it will mean more instances where the people who receive our care are at risk due to insufficient resources for hiring enough staff. The average take home for most of us is at or below a living wage in Minnesota, and after years of receiving no increases, when our services were finally recognized by the state, the increase was less than 12 cents an hour. This underfunding and band-aid approach is not enough to keep providing the high quality care our most vulnerable deserve. Unfortunately, it is also leaving people like me disillusioned and often leaving the profession, creating further care worker shortages and further risks to the people we serve.

I keep hearing in the media how, in just over six years, we will have more people age 65+ than school-aged children, and the population of people with disabilities and seniors will have skyrocketed. This is my worst fear, because if we are struggling now, what will we possibly be able to do then? The overall budget and priorities for our state must reflect these changing demographics, and help the amazing DSPs/Caregivers I work side by side with continue to provide quality, compassionate care without needing to leave to take a job at the local store just to make ends meet.

Sincerely,

Name

Address

City, State, Zip

# Tips on Writing Letters to the Editor for The 5% Campaign

The 5% Campaign is asking parents of people with disabilities, their family members, and caregivers/DSPs, to write letters to the editor as part of its strategy to pass a five percent funding increase for home and community-based services for people with disabilities and older Minnesotans. We encourage you to draft letters and send them to your local daily/weekly/monthly newspaper. Your state legislators read those newspapers, and they pay attention to what their constituents are saying. Use the tips below when composing your letters.

- Include any talking points, key messages, and/or background information that The 5% Campaign has developed.
- Ask elected official(s) to support legislation that would increase funding for community-based services by 5% in the 2014 Legislative Session.
- Be energetic and confident in your argument, but don't make personal attacks or use strident, inflammatory language.
- Follow the guidelines the publication sets for letters. It may, for example, specify limits on word length, require that your letter be submitted exclusively to its publication, and/or ask you to submit your full home address and phone number to verify your letter's authenticity.
- Thank the paper for its coverage or editorials when you agree with them.
- If your letter is in response to something already printed, submit your letter within 48 hours. Your letter will otherwise be commenting on old news, editorials, etc. and be less likely to be published.
- If at all possible, submit your letter online or by fax to make sure it arrives at the publication as quickly as possible.
- Encourage others to write letters of their own on the same topic, editorial, etc. Ask them to submit their letters promptly, too.



**The 5% CAMPAIGN**

Committing to Life in the Community for  
People with Disabilities & Older Adults

## **The 5% Percent Campaign**

*[www.facebook.com/5PercentCampaign](http://www.facebook.com/5PercentCampaign)*

*<http://www.arrm.org/news/5percentcampaign.html>*

*<https://twitter.com/5PercentMN>*