



The Impact Story Formula

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I.M.P.A.C.T.

Take the word “Impact,” and it combines two words:
Important + Action.

Advocates can make an impact (important action) by sharing their stories to influence policy.

IMPACT spells out a process anyone can follow to tell that story.



The Formula

I. Your Introduction. Who are you? Give your name, where you're from and your connection to the issue.

M. The Moment. What happened? What defining moment highlights the problem? Keep it short and driven by facts.

P. The Problem. Why did this happen? Connect your experience to a systemic issue or policy failure. Stick to facts and how the system failed.

A. The Ask. What needs to change? Promote a clear policy ask that offers a solution. Keep it direct and actional.

C. The Connection. How does the solution help? Tie your story back to the policy issue.

T. The Takeaway. What's at stake? Close with a statement that emphasizes the urgency. A good stat can also help illustrate this.



Example

I. Introduction. My name is Emily, I live in Madison, and I'm the mother of a baby born with a rare metabolic disorder.

M. The Moment. When my daughter was born, her condition was not included in Wisconsin's newborn screening panel. She looked healthy, but by three months she was in the hospital with life-threatening complications that could have been prevented.

P. The Problem. This happened because Wisconsin's screening panel wasn't fully aligned with the federal recommendations. Families here are left vulnerable when the state lags behind on adding newly recognized disorders to the panel.

A. The Ask. I'm asking you to support Assembly Bill 206/Senate Bill 962, which requires the Department of Health Services to evaluate and add new federal recommendations to the newborn screening panel in a timely manner.

C. The Connection. If this law had been in place earlier, my daughter's disorder would have been caught at birth. We could have started treatment right away and avoided a crisis that changed her first year of life.

T. The Takeaway. One in every 300 newborns is diagnosed with a condition through screening. For those babies, early detection can mean the difference between a healthy childhood and permanent disability or death. Passing this bill ensures Wisconsin babies are protected by the most up-to-date science.



Creating Your Story

Introduction

- What's your name and where are you from?
- Are you a patient, parent or caregiver?
- What's your connection to this issue?

The Moment

- What was one key moment that demonstrated your BIGGEST challenge?
- OR what happened that revealed a problem?

The Problem

- Why did this happen, or what went wrong?
- How did the system fail you or others?

The Ask

- What is the call-to-action you want the legislature to respond to?
- How does this bill or policy address the issue and fix the problem?

The Connection

- How would this bill have changed your story?
- How will it help families like yours?

The Takeaway

- What's at stake if nothing changes?
- What statistic will make them remember your story?



General Guidelines

Don't argue. Keep the focus on the issues you're supporting. Your goal is to educate and share perspective, not debate.

Don't assume they know the issue. Start with the basics. Legislators and staff juggle many policy areas, and they'll appreciate a clear, plain explanation.

Don't make anything up. If you don't know the answer, say, "I'm not sure, but I can follow up." Honesty builds credibility.

Don't go rogue. Stick with your group's agreed talking points. A united message carries more weight than one-off tangents.

Do be relatable. Share your story in plain language. Avoid technical jargon and make it easy for them to connect with the human impact.

Do follow up. A thank-you email that reiterates your ask and offers to provide more info keeps the conversation going.



Follow-Up

Stand out with a hook. Every follow-up email usually begins with a thank-you. And that's fine, but you want to stand out, right? Try to begin with a striking fact, a vivid moment from the meeting or a clear statement of the problem. This sets the tone.

Give a quick summary. Remind them who you are and why the issue matters to you in one or two sentences. Keep it personal but concise so they connect your name to your story.

Express urgency with the issue at stake. Highlight what happens if nothing changes. Use a strong fact, a clear consequence or a short comparison that shows why the problem cannot wait.

Go into the solution. Point directly to the bill/policy that addresses the issue. Be clear about how this solution fixes the problem you described and why their support is essential.

Recall the meeting. Mention the date or something specific from your conversation so the letter feels personal. This shows you valued the discussion and reminds them of the connection you made.

If you can, attach a one-sheet of your story. A simple PDF reinforces your story and keeps your ask top of mind. You can build one in Google Docs with a clean title, a short version of your IMPACT story. Canva makes it even easier if you want a more polished look. Keep it clear, uncluttered and no longer than one page.



Dear Representative/Senator [Last Name],

One in every 300 newborns is diagnosed with a condition through screening, yet Wisconsin's panel does not always keep pace with federal recommendations. That gap leaves families at risk for preventable crises. **[or use another statistic that's relevant to you].**

I am [patient, parent, caregiver] from [city]. When we met on [date], I shared how **[brief reminder of your story or detail, for example: my daughter's condition went undetected at birth and she was hospitalized by three months]**. That experience reflects what many families face when screening panels are not updated quickly.

If nothing changes, more children will **[define a negative consequence and how you/others will be affected.]**

This is why I am asking you to support [Assembly Bill 206/Senate Bill 962]. These bills will **[name something really good and how it aligns with the betterment of Wisconsin].**

I appreciated our discussion on [date] and your thoughtful question about **[insert something specific from the meeting]**. It reinforced how important it is for families like mine to share our experiences directly with policymakers who can make change happen.

Thank you for considering this issue and for your service to our state. I look forward to staying in touch and can provide any additional information you may need.

Respectfully,

Your Name



**Together in Community.
Stronger in Impact.**

SCAN HERE



The Patients Rising Circle Community connects you to events, workshops and opportunities that amplify your voice in policy.