

**Write a Letter to the Editor**

**State the problem**

For example, if the reason you support this bill is because of police violence: “Our country has been devastated by the frequent deaths and injuries of hundreds of people at the hands of the police. Police officers too often resort to excessive force in interactions with Black and Brown people and communities, despite being charged with protecting and serving those people and communities.”

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**Why are you personally concerned?**

What makes you care about this issue? What makes it personal? For example, “In 2019, Aurora police officers held down the unarmed Elijah McClain until he couldn’t breathe. Elijah was my age when he was killed. He, and the thousands of people killed by police each year, deserve justice. It is time for Colorado to demand the same accountability for law enforcement officers as it has long demanded for everyone else.”

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**Describe the problem in a way that makes it more real for the reader.**

Use facts and stories. For example, “We envision a country where no community has to fear the police. Yet, there is a clear discrepancy between how people of color and white people are policed. Black people are twice as likely to be killed by police.”

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**Why does this matter now?**

Try to tie the importance of this bill’s passage to a current event. For example, “Protests around the country are demanding an end to police violence. SB 20-217 answers the call of Coloradans who are demanding accountability for those law enforcement officers who use their power to harm black and brown people, and who get away with it, often keeping their jobs and continuing their lives while black and brown families are left to mourn the loss of their loved ones.”

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**State the solution.**

This is your call to action – you want your legislator to support SB20-217. For example, “My senator must end the police violence that has devastated communities across Colorado. Black and Brown people should not have to live in fear of the officials who are meant to serve and protect them. SB 20-217 champions a model of humane, equitable, and constitutional policing. Senator (name of your Senator) must defend this bill and ensure it passes.”

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**Write your full name, title (if relevant), address, phone number, and e-mail address.**

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**Tips:**

* **Make it your own** – Even though you’re using a template, be sure to add something personal so it’s YOUR letter.
* **Keep it short** – Most papers have a 150 to 250 word limit and readers are more likely to focus on short, to-the-point letters than long wordy ones.
* **Make it local** – Editors are more likely to print a letter if it has local significance. Send letters to weekly community newspapers. The smaller the newspaper's circulation, the easier it is to get your letter printed.
* **Pick One Issue** – You likely have many reasons for supporting SB20-217, but you only have 250 words to tell your side of the story. Pick just one reason.
* **Name names** – If you are trying to influence a decision maker be sure to include their name in your letter. This will make it more likely that they will read your letter. For example, if you are Senator Joann Ginal’s constituent, end your letter by asking her to vote to hold police accountable.
* **Make it real** – Whenever possible, give facts or tell a story rather than using general rhetoric. This will make your case come to life for readers.
* **Sign the letter** – Be sure to write your full name (and title, if relevant) and to include your address, phone number, and e-mail address. Newspapers won't print anonymous letters, though in some cases they may withhold your name on request. They may also call you to confirm that you wrote the letter before they publish it.
* **Send the letter to your legislator** – If your letter is printed, make sure to email a copy of the letter printed online or send a copy of the letter printed in the newspaper to your legislator so they see that you care about this issue and took the time to write in.

**Find your legislator here:** http://leg.colorado.gov/findmylegislator