



Expand Paid Leave for People with Chronic Conditions During COVID-19 Telling Your Story: A Step-by-Step Worksheet

People have been telling stories since human beings first sat around campfires. We are hard-wired to take in new information through stories.

Statistics reach people in the head. Stories hit people in the heart. Sharing your personal experience is a powerful way to establish a connection and drive your listener to action. Your audience (e.g., elected officials, donors, the media, other volunteers) may disagree with your facts or arguments, but they cannot argue with your unique personal experience.

The below steps are based on research in effective storytelling, but you should tailor them to your own circumstances.

1. Hi. I'm name from [place].

If meeting with a Congress Member, identify yourself as living in their district.

2. I [or a loved one] had [type of cancer] in [year or x years ago]. Because of my [or my loved one's] history of cancer and cancer treatment, I am especially vulnerable to COVID-19. Cancer survivors may be at higher risk of health complications from COVID-19 and may experience more serious infection if they acquire it.

3. As a result of COVID-19, I [or my loved one] have not been working or earning an income since [X time]. [Insert details]

Example: We have almost spent down our savings.

Example: We aren't able to pay our full [rent or mortgage] payment and are currently negotiating with [our landlord or bank], but nothing is for sure.

Example: I am fortunate that I get to [stay at home/work at home] but not all cancer survivors can do that.

4. Expanding eligibility for the paid family and medical leave program to include people like me [or my loved one], who the CDC considers at high risk, will allow me to stay home and keep safe during the COVID-19 pandemic and help other cancer survivors stay healthy and safe.

5. We were happy to see the expansion of paid family and medical leave included in HR 6800, the HEROES Act. People with underlying health conditions and members of their household need job protection and financial support so they can remain at home for the duration of the pandemic.

6. Can you help me and other cancer survivors who may require time away from work due to the risk that COVID-19 poses to our health or the health of a loved one?

Next, practice telling your story. Time it and try to keep it under two minutes. Hang onto the details that are vivid and memorable. Omit the content that is unnecessary or distracting. Ask for feedback from friends and other volunteers. With practice, you will be able to shake your nervousness, but keep your energy and passion.