

Crafting Your Story to Effect Change



Your story is a powerful tool for advocacy. Whether you're a patient, caregiver, healthcare professional, researcher, or a member of the general public, your story creates an emotional connection to the issue and stands out to legislators. Stories are even more powerful when accompanied by a photo or video.

You can have an impact on public policy by sharing your story paired with a clear policy ask. Start by taking key provisions of the bill and identify ways in which they would impact you. You don't need to be a legislative expert to do this—just an expert on your personal experiences. Here's an example of what an effective story would look like:

"As an IBD patient, I've been forced to try three medications before insurance approved the one my doctor originally wanted me to take. Because of this, I experienced the worst flare of my life, causing more damage to my intestines. Representative XX, please co-sponsor [bill #] so that I, and other patients like me, can access the medication I need, when I need it."

Use these prompts to help craft your story:

- What is your IBD story? *Share when you were diagnosed, any surgeries, number of medications tried, and other pertinent details.*

- How does your story relate to the legislator's district or state? *Mention that you are a constituent, or localize any specific examples from your story.*

- What are metrics you can include? *Number of missed days of work or school, costs of medications, number of days in the hospital, etc.*

- How would the policy impact you? *Make an emotional appeal.*

- What is the policy ask? *Include it at the beginning and end of your story.*

We recommend keeping your story brief—between one to two written paragraphs or minutes. A typical in-person meeting will last around 15 minutes. Practice telling your story so you can communicate it easily in meetings or correspondence. Join the Advocacy Network email listserv (<http://bit.ly/2ExfZj4>) to receive updates on policies that impact the IBD community as well as action alerts!

Contact: advocacy@crohnscolitisfoundation.org