

 **LETTERS TO THE EDITOR**

A **letter to the editor** (sometimes abbreviated **LTTE** or **LTE**) is a letter sent to a publication about issues of concern from its readers. Usually, letters are intended for publication. In many publications, letters to the editor may be sent either through conventional mail or electronic mail. Letters to the editor are a great way to get your voice heard on important drug policy reform issues.

WHEN TO WRITE ONE:

- As a response a poorly represented drug policy article
- Explaining our view on the war on drugs
- Bringing attention to a campus drug/alcohol policy
- You should aim for at least once per semester
- ASAP after an article/event that you're responding to - max 1 week
- To correct a fact/opinion about your chapter and/or drug policy

HOW:

- Utilize our template available on ssdp.org/resources/lte
- Formulate your argument: premise, supporting evidence, conclusion
- Keep it short and to the point. Many newspapers have limits on how long LTE's can be, generally 150 – 300 words. Check the limits beforehand, and **shorter is always better**.
- Contact your Outreach Director for guidance, edits, revisions, suggestions, etc.

WHERE TO SEND IT:

- School newspaper(s)
- Local newspapers and online media (aim for at least 5)
- Look for opinions dept./editor or specific LTE address (ex: letters@diamondback.com)

ADDITIONAL TIPS:

- Try to concentrate on one or two talking points in the letter.
- If you have a personal story regarding someone you lost to an overdose, make sure to reference that experience.
- Try to submit your letter to the editor ASAP. The sooner you submit a letter in response to a recent publication, the more timely it is and the better your chance of it being published.
- You can sign your LTE with your name and/or your chapter's name.
- Send the text of your letter in the body of the email (many newspapers won't accept letters as attachments).
- When sending your letter, make sure to email each newspaper individually rather than sending a mass message to all of them.
- Make sure to directly reference the editorial you are responding to.
- Include your full name, SSDP affiliation, and daytime telephone number at the end of your letter for verification purposes.



The University of Miami Should Implement a 911 Good Samaritan Policy

When someone in America overdoses, a call for help occurs less than 50% of the time, and fear of police involvement is the most common reason for not calling 911 during an overdose. How can we fix this? Simple: grant amnesty to people in life-threatening situations so they don't have to decide between saving a life and facing penalties for underage drinking, for example.

Students who are aware that a 911 Good Samaritan (medical amnesty) policy is in effect are 2.5 times more likely than students who expect to face disciplinary actions to call for help when witnessing the signs of alcohol poisoning.

Good Samaritan Policies shouldn't be viewed as "get out of jail free cards" or rewards for binge drinking. Rather, they provide students with the clarity they need in order to make responsible, life-saving decisions during confusing and stressful party situations. Every minute spent worrying about judicial consequences is another minute it will take for help to arrive. That minute can very literally be the difference between life and death. Campus administrators at UM are concerned about sending the right message. A Good Samaritan Policy would send the message that campus officials care more about keeping students alive than punishing them. A message against the dangers of binge drinking or drug abuse should never have to come in the form of a student's obituary.

There are currently at least 91 colleges and universities with 911 Good Samaritan Policies, and there are 11 states with statewide Good Samaritan legislation. The University of Miami will not be the first to put students' lives ahead of punishment, and we certainly won't be the last.

Last year, Florida Governor Rick Scott signed into law a statewide 911 Good Samaritan Policy. It is time for the University of Miami to modernize its policies and adopt a Good Samaritan Policy at the campus level.

For more information about Good Samaritan Policies or to get involved in advocating for one at UM, please visit ssdp.org or email drew@ssdp.org

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