

Dear _____,

I am writing to you as a concerned citizen of _____ and _____. I am a volunteer with International House, an internationally minded non-profit organization that supports immigrants in Mecklenburg and surrounding counties. As front-line providers of services and as organizations grounded in their communities, charitable nonprofits have a stake in the strength and well-being of the economy, and of governments at all levels, and in ensuring that the needs of all of our residents, especially those that have been historically underserved and underrepresented, are heard and addressed. **I am writing to express concern about OMB's attempts to freeze federal spending for many vital non-profit agency programs.**

Budget and spending decisions by governments affect all residents and these decisions can have immediate and significant consequences for the people we serve and the communities in which we operate. According to data from the US Census Bureau in 2022, there were approximately 180,000 immigrants in Mecklenburg County, the most of any county in North Carolina. On a wider lens, 13.8% of the nation's residents are foreign-born, more than half of whom are naturalized citizens. Immigrants in the United States pay nearly \$525 billion annually in federal, state, and local taxes, a vital contribution to revenue. Immigrants made up 18.1% of the overall labor force in 2022, a sizable share that has increased in recent years and continues to increase. As active participants in our economy, but also as human beings, they deserve to be supported by their communities through programs that are now in jeopardy.

The nonprofit sector not only provides invaluable programs and services that impact the economy but is a significant employer, making it a vital part of the economy. Prior to the pandemic, charitable organizations employed more than 12.3 million individuals nationally (\$360+k in NC), paid \$826 billion in wages, benefits, and payroll every year (\$19 billion in NC), and spent nearly \$2 trillion annually (\$56 billion in NC). Charitable nonprofit organizations are integrally involved in the economies of our communities, our state, and the country. Data consistently shows that charitable organizations could perform even more effectively with sufficient financial and human resources to meet the needs of our nation's communities.

International House supports refugees and immigrants in Charlotte in a myriad of ways. In 2023, 9 out of 10 participants in our ESL programs maintained or increased their English skills. 974 people engaged in an Intercultural Experience at International House through foreign language conversation clubs, book clubs, young professional groups and social gatherings. We helped 101 people obtain their green cards and become active working members of our economy. 182 people participated in our Cultural Sensitivity Trainings, providing vital information and skills to better support those with limited English proficiency. International House also employs 21 individuals, many of whom are immigrants themselves. We have proudly supported our community for over 40 years, but we cannot do this work alone. I ask you to consider such programs as ours that protect every person's dignity, governed by core humanitarian principles and grounded in values of hospitality, compassion, and welcome. It is our collective responsibility as Americans.

I call on you _____ to please ask Reps. Mike Johnson and Steve Scalise / Senators Chuck Grassley and John Thune to advocate for the unconditional reinstatement of all previously allocated funding for non-profit programming. You are also invited anytime to visit International House to see first-hand the work we do to support the community. Your voice means a lot for me and those we serve. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Successful Advocacy Letters

Adapted from NC Center for Nonprofits

<https://ncnonprofits.org/public-policy-blog/writing-effective-notes-your-elected-officials>

1. **What outcome do you want?** Stating your mission or position from the start may help to introduce your organization to your audience.
2. **Who holds the authority to make these things happen?** In some cases, it's one individual; in many, it'll take many people reaching agreement. Asking yourself this question may help you to avoid expending energy on trying to persuade people who really don't have the authority to do what you want. Letters tend to go ignored if there is no authority to make change.
3. **Of all these people, who does it make the most sense for YOU to ask for support?** If you're engaging in legislative advocacy, most frequently you'll want to address your request to the people who ACTUALLY represent you. Just type in your address at the <https://www.congress.gov/members/find-your-member> to get your federal list. Make sure you establish yourself as a voting member of their specific constituency right from the start.
4. **What do you know about what they care about? What do THEY want?** No matter who you're approaching, an investment of five minutes on their websites and social media can reveal a lot about their values and priorities. Generally speaking, all policy makers care about how issues affect their own constituents and appreciate opportunities to demonstrate their values and commitment to the communities they serve. Additionally, both lawmakers and their aides typically welcome opportunities to learn more about issues from local experts and appreciate well-sourced data to help inform their decisions.
5. **How can YOU help them get what they want?** Can you give them an opportunity to demonstrate their values through their actions? Can you help them make evidence-based decisions? Will taking the action you request please voters in their district? It occasionally even helps to send letters to news agencies if your letters go unanswered. It is always polite to let a legislator know in advance if you plan to go this route.
6. **What specific request do you want to make of them?** Make sure to come right out and make a direct ask. Letters that do not mention action items will largely go unanswered! Make sure again to know what your legislator can actually control.
7. **What details will matter the most to them?** Share a compelling anecdote that will stick with them, present any relevant data in digestible ways, quantify (as best you can) how many of their constituents are connected to your organization, and remind them of any connections you've made in the past. If they're a vocal member of a sports fan-base, mention your connection. Any little bit of humanity helps!