Example letter to policymaker

This letter template is intended to be adapted for your purposes. Ensure it is tailored with context-specific information, local data (where available) and personal experience. See the 'how to write a letter to policy makers' guide for more information.

[Insert First and Last Name]

- Date
- MP's constituency office address
- MP email

Dear [MP's Name],
My name is [YOUR NAME] and I am a constituent of [YOUR CONSTITUENCY]. I am writing to you today about the critical importance of testing, treatment and prevention of hepatitis C virus infection which is widespread within [YOUR JURISDICTION/COUNTRY]'s prison system.

The World Health Organisation estimated that in 2022, approximately 242 000 people died from hepatitis C, mostly from cirrhosis and hepatocellular carcinoma (primary liver cancer). Beyond the immediate health risks of hepatitis C to people living in prison — including liver failure, cancer, and even death if left untreated — there are also concerns about the virus being transmitted to the public if infected individuals are released back into the community without treatment.

Hepatitis C is a curable disease that is devastating our communities
Despite the availability or highly effective treatment options, with cure rates of over 95%, XX people die from hepatitis C every single year in [YOUR JURISDICTION/COUNTRY], many of whom are behind prison walls. There is no other disease that can be so devastating yet so easily treated, and this must change.

Failure to act is unacceptable and not only jeopardises the health of people living in prison but also poses a risk to the broader community. This holds particular significance for me due to [PROVIDE ANY KEY REASONS OR PERSONAL EXPERIENCES, OR REMOVE IF NOT RELEVANT]. Moreover, the United Nation Nelson Mandela rules stipulate that *"prisoners should enjoy the same standards of health care that are available in the community, and should have access to necessary health care services… without discrimination on the grounds of their legal status."* This is not being upheld in our country.

Furthermore, it stands in direct contradiction to the commitment our government made at the 69th World Health Assembly in 2016, where we agreed to eliminate viral hepatitis by 2030, in alignment with the World Health Organization (WHO) Global Health Sector Strategy on Viral Hepatitis.

Unfortunately, the [YOUR JURISDICTION/COUNTRY] strategic framework for the control of viral hepatitis lacks a clear intervention direction with regards to the prison setting. With less than a decade remaining, only a handful of nations are making successful strides toward hepatitis C elimination by 2030. To ensure our country joins those leading the charge, we must urgently and significantly enhance testing, treatment and prevention of hepatitis C in prisons.

Recommended actions

I am writing to urgently advocate for our prisons to [IMPLEMENT/SCALE-UP] HCV testing, treatment and prevention. Developed by the International Network on Health and Hepatitis in Substance Users - Prisons Network (INHSU Prisons), the below framework provides practical steps and consideration to make this a reality:

1. Implement best practice testing, treatment, and community linkage programs including rapid and reflex testing, to ensure all individuals progress along the cascade of care to cure
2. Invest in strong surveillance systems that track the number of hepatitis C infections, individuals screened, and individuals treated for hepatitis C in prison settings
3. Address stigma and discrimination through investing in strong patient advocacy, peer navigators, and prison staff education and training
4. Adopt routine, opt-out hepatitis C screening policies upon entry to prison settings and invest in person-centered training for staff
5. Expand access to prevention measures such as opioid agonist therapy, and consider implementing needle and syringe programs within prison settings to reduce transmission

Together, we need to spread the message that 'prison health is community health'. I trust this letter underscores the urgency of prioritising the health and well-being of individuals within our prison system and addressing the prevalence of hepatitis C.

With your leadership and advocacy, I am confident we can enact meaningful reforms that benefit both people living in prison and the broader community.

In response, I kindly request an outline of the steps your department intends to take to address this matter. Please keep me informed of any developments on this issue. Thank you for your time and I eagerly await your response.

Sincerely,
[Your Name]
[Your Address]
[Your Contact Information]

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