



## Tip Sheet for Sign-On Letters

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### INTRODUCTION: The Sign-on Letter

The process of obtaining signatures for a sign-on letter is an important advocacy and organizing act. By circulating the sign-on letter, you will make key contacts and gain exposure to a large group of advocates who you might not reach any other way. Sign-on letters are often used as a key tool in building a more permanent relationship with individuals and new coalition partners.

The essential steps to developing and disseminating a sign-on letter include the following.

#### 1. Define Your Goals and Identify your Targets

As always, your first step will be to outline the goals and identify your targets associated with this activity. Keep your letter focused for your chosen audience and you will be much more effective.

Set a goal for co-sponsors signatures and decide what the scope is (state, county, or city). Determine an attainable but ambitious number of additional individual or organization leaders where each co-sponsor will contribute increased public and political support by adding their names to the letter. Determine how many different sign-on letters you want to do and the timing of those letters. In some campaigns it is better to have multiple sign-on letters such as faith leaders, civic organizations, etc. rather than combining them all into one letter; other times a large list of diverse people matters most. Make a strategic decision on the use and effectiveness of each approach.

#### 2. Draft a Letter

Draft a strong letter that clearly expresses the importance of **INSERT NAME OF YOUR POLICY** smart growth policy, adheres to your message and the need for **INSERT YOUR GOAL**. The letter should offer compelling information and convey the special perspective that the sign-on groups may have – for example, **INSERT RELEVANT GROUP (i.e. faith)**. This will provide the framework of your shared efforts in the weeks and months to come.

#### 3. Identify Targets & Recruit

Identify targets and recruit sign-on sponsors strategically. Build a group of organizations and individuals that carry weight with policymakers, opinion leaders and the media. Make sure that

you reach a broad range of individuals or organizations, including unlikely allies. Prioritize. If one influential organization or individual will help recruit other organizations, focus on getting them on board first.

Be prepared to make presentations to organizations, attend their monthly meetings, provide background information, and field requests for additional information. As individuals sign on, it's important to send periodic updates to current and prospective sponsors. This will help create momentum within your community.

#### **4. Using Your Sign-on Letter and Media Coverage (If appropriate)**

When you have recruited as many co-sponsors as possible for a key group; present the letter in a scheduled meeting with a decision maker, as part of your pressure campaign. Extend the effort to media coverage if appropriate. Ideally this would be done in a meeting or at a press conference/event with sponsor organizations and decision makers. Also, consider sending a copy of the sign-on letter to local media.

Use the sign-on letter as a power building and messaging tool.