

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.

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 identifying 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 with celiac disease. Here's an example of what an effective story would look like:

*“As a celiac disease patient (or caregiver, parent, physician, researcher, etc.), the travesty is that the **only** treatment for my disease, the gluten-free diet, is inadequate and leaves millions of Americans suffering needlessly. I live in constant fear knowing that ingesting just one tiny crumb of gluten will trigger debilitating illness and increase my risk of cancer, heart disease, and additional autoimmune disorders. Please support NIH funding of celiac disease research for FY2021 in order to develop new treatments, find a cure, and help improve the lives of patients like me.”*

Use these prompts to help craft your story:

- ➔ What is your (or another's) celiac story? Share when you were diagnosed, any associated conditions you have developed, hardships that your celiac disease has caused, and other pertinent details.

- ➔ How does your (or another's) 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 (or someone with celiac disease)? 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 it comes easily in meetings or correspondence. Remember to keep in contact and let us know the results of your Congressional meetings in your home states! Contact: sierra.manning@celiac.org