



## Using a Message Wheel to Keep Your Messaging on Track

A message wheel is a simple visual format for organizing the messages that are key to your issue. Your most important message—that one thing you always want to share—is placed in the middle of the wheel. Supporting statements—which would likely include the problem, solution, and one or two other key statements—are placed around the wheel like spokes. Points that explain or expound on your supporting statements are added under each heading.

You will want to use the central message every time you communicate about your issue, whether you are writing a letter to the editor or Op-Ed, speaking to a neighborhood group about your issue, answering questions about your cause, or being interviewed in the media. Sounds simple, right? When you are the one in control of the message, like writing a letter to the editor or preparing a presentation, it should be. You don't have to use every point every time. Just select the supporting messages that are most likely to resonate with your audience, add examples, stories, and descriptive language to paint the picture for the audience. Make it your own!

However, in situations where you are responding to questions, such as during an interview, following a presentation, or when meeting with a decision maker about your issue, making sure you are coming back to your central message can become a little more tricky. This is when the visual layout of the message wheel can be an especially helpful tool for you and your spokespeople. The message wheel helps show the connections between your

supporting messages and your central message. When you are asked a question, find that thread that can take you back to a point under a supporting statement and bridge to that. Once you have made it to your supporting statement, you can link back to your central message.

To use this tool most effectively, spend some time digging into it and thinking about examples from your work, your neighborhood, or your family that you could share to personalize your messages. When you are writing, use those examples to make your cause more relatable to others. When you are preparing for an interview, think about the arguments that those who disagree with your position might bring up and plan a response that can bring you back to your central message—and then practice your response.

By bringing the most important points for your issue into one place and using it, you'll be sure to keep your messaging on track.

# Paid Family and Medical Leave

## **Most workers in the U.S. do not have access to paid family and medical leave to bond with a new child or care for themselves or a sick or injured family member.**

- Only a quarter of people who work for private companies and a third of people who work for state and local governments have access to paid family leave.
- Access to paid family and medical leave is lowest among workers who may need it most.
- People with higher incomes, college degrees, and full-time jobs are more likely to have paid medical and family leave.
- Employees who work in production, transportation, and service sectors have some of the lowest rates of access to paid leave.
- Black and Latino/Hispanic families report less access to paid leave than white families, which may be a result of longstanding discriminatory policies and structural racism.

## **Paid family and medical leave is important for the short- and long-term health of adults and children.**

- Nursing parents who have access to paid leave are more likely to breastfeed, which has been shown to improve the heart health of the parent and baby.
- Paid leave policies may lead to fewer preterm and low-birthweight babies, especially for Black mothers.
- Paid leave policies have long-term health benefits for children, partly due to prompt medical check-ups during infancy.

**Too many workers are forced to sacrifice their savings or their jobs when they need time off to bond with a new child or care for themselves or their families. All workers, no matter where they live or who their employer is, should have access to paid family and medical leave. Paid leave helps children and families thrive, which improves their overall health and benefits the economy.**

## **Paid family and medical leave is good for businesses and the economy**

- Women who take paid leave after the birth of a child are more likely to reenter the workforce within a year of the child's birth.
- Businesses that offer paid leave may see increased productivity, profits, retention, and morale and decreased turnover.
- In states with paid maternity leave, fewer families have to rely on public assistance programs like Temporary Assistance for Needy Families.

## **Paid family and medical leave should be available to all workers.**

- The U.S. is one of the only countries in the world that does not guarantee paid family and medical leave.
- States should ensure workers can manage personal and family life events without worrying about losing their income or job. This includes managing a serious personal health condition, caring for a family member with a serious health condition, or bonding with a new child after birth, adoption, or placement in foster care.
- As of 2022, California, Colorado, Connecticut, the District of Columbia, Delaware, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Jersey, New York, Oregon, Rhode Island, and Washington have already passed paid leave laws. These laws may help improve the health of families, reduce food insecurity, allow more women to reenter the workforce, and boost business and employee retention.
- We must act now to ensure the next generation of children grows into healthy adults.