



HPV & CERVICAL CANCER POLICY & LEGISLATIVE TOOLKIT, 3RD EDITION

SAMPLE CONSTITUENT LETTER

[DATE]

[CONSTITUENT NAME]
[ADDRESS]
[CITY, STATE, ZIP]

Dear [NAME],

This year, approximately 12,900 women in the United States are expected to be diagnosed with cervical cancer, while 4,100 women are expected to die from the disease.

Almost all cervical cancers are caused by human papillomavirus (HPV), a common virus spread by skin-to-skin contact. There are over 150 types, or strains, of HPV, many of which are harmless to humans. However, several types of HPV, known as “high-risk,” can convert normal cells on the cervix into cancerous ones. If left unchecked and untreated, these cells can turn into cervical cancer.

Most women who are diagnosed with cervical cancer today have not had regular Pap tests, or Pap smears, or have not followed up on abnormal Pap test results, however, when detected at an early stage, cervical cancer has a five-year survival rate of 91 percent, which plummets to a mere 16 percent when cervical cancer is caught at an advanced stage. Through vaccination and screening, cervical cancer and cervical cancer-related death, can be prevented.

Screening for cervical cancer is generally recognized as effective in reducing morbidity and mortality. Many health promotion organizations, including the American Cancer Society, recommend routine screening for the detection of cervical cancer. Women should begin cervical cancer screening at age 21, regardless of when they begin to participate in sexual activity. Pap tests should be performed every three years in women who are 21 to 29 years old. Women 30 to 65 should get Pap test and a HPV test every five years, or a Pap test alone every three years. More frequent screening may be necessary in women who have had abnormal Pap tests or a previous diagnosis of cervical cancer.

Additionally, there are currently three vaccines on the market that are designed to offer protection against the most “high-risk” types of HPV. These vaccines, which are recommended by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), are licensed, safe, and effective for both males and females ages nine through 26. Aside from cervical cancer, HPV is also linked to cancer of the vagina and vulva in females, cancer of the penis in males, and cancer of the anus and oropharynx (head and neck) in both sexes. Vaccination is an important step in reducing these risks.

As your state legislator, I understand the importance of providing education and raising awareness on health-related issues. I urge you to protect yourself, as well as your friends and family members, from HPV and cervical cancer. Is it vitally important that women receive routine Pap tests and it is equally important that we get vaccinated against HPV. For more information on HPV and cervical cancer, please visit my website at [WEBSITE] or contact me and [PHONE] or [E-MAIL].

Sincerely,
[LEGISLATOR]