STATE ADVOCACY RESOURCE:
Guide to Writing an Op-ed

To assist you in your state-level advocacy efforts, AccessLex Institute has drafted a guide to help you write an op-ed advocating for state funds to aid law students.

If you write an op-ed from scratch, below are general tips and an outline to help you get started.

We have also drafted sample op-eds that, with your personalization, are ready for use in your advocacy efforts. Writing your own op-ed or drawing from our examples will give you the opportunity to include personal experiences and relevant local information. Have your op-ed published through local news outlets or any source that will help you reach your state legislators. Your voice and engagement at the state-level can impact the policymaking process. We encourage you to make your voice heard.

General Tips

- **Brevity is key.** Desired word count varies by publication (reach out to the publication to check their requirements), but an op-ed should not exceed 750 words. This means it’s important to keep your piece to one idea or topic. Additionally, you should aim to have short sentences and paragraphs for general readability.

- **Timeliness.** You know your state best and when it may be most opportune to introduce a relevant issue for state-wide discussion. For example, if you are requesting a new source of funding for students, this may be most appropriate when the state legislature is considering the budget.

- **Don’t bury the lede.** You should include your recommendation in the opening paragraph and restate it at the end. Also, if you can, offer a specific recommendation. For example, you may write about a program that has been considered by the legislature before but was never enacted or a program that previously existed but was eventually phased out.

- **Be personal, where appropriate.** Your legislators represent you, and they want to hear from you—their constituents. Your voice, as an expert practitioner, is important to the policy discussions in your state. Also, illustrating the human impact of a policy through stories is a highly effective strategy to better inform your governor and state legislators about the impact of proposals they are considering.
Outline

Opening
- First, introduce the issue. Your introductory sentence should grab the reader’s attention.
- Next, briefly explain the issue, provide the reader with context, and properly frame the issue. In the opening, you may want to incorporate a personal story to humanize your case.
- Transition from the opening to the body of your piece with the solution to address the issue.

Body
- The body serves to present the strongest arguments and facts that support your solution.
- Arguments may include: economic return on investment, closing the justice gap, supporting low-income and underrepresented students.
- Limit your arguments for sake of brevity and use of data points for sake of readability.

Conclusion
- Finally, restate your issue, reiterate what you are asking of your intended audience, and call on them to act. This invites your reader to become involved in the solution.