Advocacy Letter: Letter to An Elected or Public Official or Advocacy Organization

Per syllabus, with dates added: Carried out over the final third of the semester, this assignment involves:
(1) selecting a policy issue to address in an advocacy letter to a public or elected official,
(2) obtaining instructor approval of the topic (via the Advocacy Letter Proposal journal, 2 points, then read and respond to instructor feedback another 2 points,
(3) personally writing a draft of a social policy-relevant advocacy letter, via Advocacy Letter Itself Module, due 4/13, up to 6 points
(4) after receiving instructor feedback and making initial changes, presenting a revised letter to the class or small group, as assigned by instructor (by starting a thread and posting it by 4/20 to the Group Discussion board within Groups and watching for feedback, group participation points only for this,
(5) personally writes a final version of the letter that incorporates instructor and other feedback, by 4/27, for up to 6 points,
(6) after making final corrections provides the instructor a signed copy of the letter in a UNsealed (so instructor can inspect it), stamped, addressed envelope for instructor to seal and mail, which must be delivered to a special box in the School of Social Work reception office or mailed to the instructor in a larger envelope so that the contents are ready to be mailed. Four points. 1 point off if missing stamp, return address or the letter is not signed. 1 point off each step that you are late.

For assistance with this assignment, please see the Advocacy Letter Page: http://tinyurl.com/2vack9j You must use the Letter Blank format provided for you at this site. This will provide uniformity and permit us to focus on content rather than correct problems with form.

In the letter, you should identify yourself as a social work student, and thus the letter should reflect the quality we expect in the academic work of our students. Be sure it is properly written and spell checked. You must prepare this letter with reference to the Fundamental Do's and Don't of Letter Writing found in the Advocacy section (page 3) of the Appendices to the Michigan League for Human Services handbook and which is on course reserves and at http://tinyurl.com/cmp47r.

Please use the following approaches to heading and salutation:

The Honorable (Then Elected Official’s Full Name as on Senator’s Website)
United States Senator or Ohio State Senator or
United States Representative or Ohio State Representative or Cleveland Mayor etc..
Mailing Address

Re: Your topic/what you are writing about

Dear Senator Lastnameofsenator or Congressman/woman Lastname or Representative Lastname or
Governor or Mayor or Councilperson

Please keep in mind that you don't have to present yourself as an expert. One of the purposes of advocacy letters is to ask questions, raise problems, discuss issues. The choice of elected official or public official (an unelected employee usually in a position related to public policy) should be appropriate for the nature of the topic about which you are writing. Be sure you are writing a federal official about a federal issue or a state official about a state issue! The letter should be on a topic relevant to social welfare policy. Students are encouraged to share with the class the responses, if any, to their letter.
There are many websites to help you identify your local, state, and national congressional representatives:

Federal:
http://www.house.gov/writerep/
http://www.senate.gov/general/contact_information/senators_cfm.cfm

State:
http://ohio.gov/how/government.stm#4

Cuyahoga County Commissioners:
http://www.bocc.cuyahogacounty.us/commissioners.htm

Cleveland City Government:  http://www.clevelandcitycouncil.org/

Grading of the Advocacy Letter:

The grade for the Advocacy Letter will be based half upon the effectiveness of the argument made about the issue you have written about. The other half of the grade for the Advocacy Letter will be based upon writing quality. In judging the Writing Quality in the Advocacy Letter, the following criteria are used.
(1) Grammar, punctuation, spelling, clarity, sentence structure, paragraph structure, (2) The effectiveness of the writing used in making the arguments for the issue being raised in the letter, (3) Written expression of critical (analytic) thinking about the material covered, (4) Proper use of quotations, (5) Proper citation of materials including punctuation associated with citations, (6) Use of two spaces after every sentence (not one, not three). However, both the effectiveness grade and the writing quality grade are based upon the Section Grading Policy’s qualitative criteria. In other words, does the instructor judge the work to be outstanding, excellent, very very good, very good, good, fairly good, somewhat good, fair, poor or unacceptable.

Advocacy Letter Proposal (four points out of the 20):

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1 point off each step that you are late.

Full instructions are found in Blackboard under Journals. For a printable PDF file of the instructions to this Proposal, see Prof. Dover's Policy Page and its SWK 201 Advocacy Letter Page.
The proposal involves creating a Journal entry, then reading and responding to my feedback and attaching a Letter Blank with a second journal entry. This is four points out of the 20 points for the Advocacy Letter Module. 6 points for the draft, 6 for the final, and 4 points for providing the ready to mail letter.

.5 point deduction for not following instructions. .5 deduction for late proposals. 1 point deduction for late letter draft and 1 point deduction for late final letter.

FIRST JOURNAL

To start, copy the following questions into your word processor and write your answers following each question (up to 3 points).

To Whom Do You Plan to Write your Letter? 1 point.
(Provide the full name; title of the person and contact information. This is usually an elected or government official. You may wish to visit Prof. Dover's Policy Page and its SWK 201 Advocacy Letter page for links to how to find who it is to whom you plan to write.)

About what topic do you plan to write? (one point)
(Explain/describe in one solid paragraph the issue or the piece of legislation you plan to address. It may or may not be related to your Fact Sheet topic. You may want to read my feedback on your Identify Policy Issues Journal, as I often said something about that issue.)

Is this topic related to your Fact Sheet, and why is this issue important to you? (One point)
(A simple yes or not on the Fact Sheet and a solid paragraph about why this is important to you.)

A solid answer to above questions is worth full credit. Failure to fully answer the questions, .5 deduction but you may still receive approval. If you see 0 points as your grade, it means your proposal was not approved and you must re-submit. Just see my feedback and create another Proposal for up to 3 points. This is because I often need to reject a proposal for any number of reasons, including as simple as you writing the wrong level of government, like a member of Congress about a bill pending in the Ohio General Assembly. It is up to you to look or that 2.5 or 3 and to know if your Proposal is accepted.

After writing your answers, select the Questions a-n-d your answers (remember, each answer must be after each question; don't make me look for where one begins and one ends). Then copy your work and follow the link to Journals: Advocacy Letter Module Proposal, Create Journal Entry, and paste your answer into the box. NAME IT FIRST JOURNAL. Do not use an attachment. .5 point deduction for not following instructions. .5 deduction for late proposals.

SECOND JOURNAL

Create Journal entry, naming it SECOND JOURNAL. Read my feedback on your journal topic and respond with brief comments in the Box. as directed. Visit Prof. Dover's Policy Page and it's SWK 201 Advocacy Letter Page. Download Letter Blank and save it as yourlastnameletter.doc to your hard drive. Now, just upload it as an attachment to this Journal! That's it! One additional point and your Proposal is approved.