



Medicaid **covers** US

ACS CAN Partner Toolkit

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Introduction

Access to health care coverage is critical to reducing suffering and death from cancer. For decades, the American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network (ACS CAN) has advocated at the state and federal level to improve access to quality, affordable health care for all Americans. Medicaid plays a significant and critical role in improving access to care and health outcomes—but the program is often misunderstood and mischaracterized.

Medicaid is a health insurance program that ensures low-income children, adults, seniors and people with disabilities get comprehensive health care. It provides coverage for hard-working Americans to get the care they need to go to work, do well in school, and take care of their families. It helps women deliver healthy babies; children get their well-child visits; people with disabilities remain in their communities; seniors have options for long-term care services; people access preventive care and cancer screenings; and ensure those diagnosed with serious diseases like cancer have access to treatment services.

Medicaid allows local hospitals, clinics, doctors, and schools to provide health care to the members of their community. Medicaid helps rural hospitals keep their doors open and community health centers provide primary and preventive care to people with few affordable options. When hospitals and clinics are thriving, they create jobs, which in turn supports local and state economic growth.

As 36 states across the country and the District of Columbia have expanded Medicaid, there are still 14 states that have chosen not to provide millions of parents and adults access to affordable health insurance options through the program. In many states, new rules are being implemented or considered to impose burdensome requirements on Medicaid eligibility, jeopardizing access to health coverage for those the program is designed to serve.

That's why ACS CAN launched *Medicaid Covers US*, a national public education project to raise awareness of the value of the Medicaid. Through the power of storytelling, we hope to elevate the positive impact Medicaid has not just on beneficiaries but on communities and our nation.

We cannot do this alone. We hope you will partner with us in this important undertaking. The resources in this toolkit are designed to help you join our effort. Together, we can show the critical role Medicaid plays.

Thank you for sharing your stories with us.



Messaging

ACS CAN conducted messaging research to gain knowledge about the value of Medicaid from people covered by the program, providers who care for eligible individuals and families, state policy makers and the public. This research confirmed that it is critically important to remind people of Medicaid's fundamental role in providing health insurance to vulnerable populations and telling stories of real people who use and have been impacted by the program. For families and individuals across this country, Medicaid means everything from regular check-ups to lifesaving cancer treatments. For doctors and health care providers, it means rural clinics and hospitals can remain open. For schools, it means kids are ready to learn and able to succeed. For local businesses and communities, it means a healthy, productive workforce and access to jobs and opportunities. Individual stories that show these impacts of Medicaid have the power to change perceptions, build understanding, and challenge stereotypes.

Below are the messages that resonated the most. We hope you will incorporate these into your communications.

Having health insurance through Medicaid helps Americans stay healthy, go to work, care for their families and pay the bills. And that helps our communities—our hospitals, schools and economy—thrive. Medicaid covers individuals, families and communities. *Medicaid Covers US.*

Medicaid helps America's families stay healthy and our communities thrive. It provides health insurance to low-income children and adults, seniors and people with disabilities, so that millions of people can get the health care they need to get healthy and stay healthy. It allows them to see a doctor when they are sick, get check-ups, buy medications and go to the hospital. And, Medicaid's low cost protects the family budget from medical debt—because no one should have to choose between paying for health care and paying for rent or groceries. When our families thrive, our communities and our economy are stronger. Medicaid keeps hospital doors open to provide lifesaving care for people with cancer and other diseases, secures more jobs in our communities and helps America become a healthier, more prosperous nation. Medicaid Covers US.

Core Messages

- ★ Medicaid is a health insurance program for low-income children and adults, seniors, and people with disabilities.
- ★ Medicaid health insurance helps millions of people manage serious illnesses, including diabetes and cancer.
 - 2.3 million Americans with a history of cancer rely on Medicaid coverage for their care.
 - With Medicaid, people can get preventive care like screenings, so they can detect cancer earlier and see better health outcomes.
- ★ Having health coverage allows people to work and take care of their families.
- ★ Medicaid health insurance makes it possible for millions of low-income children and adults to get and stay healthy.
- ★ It allows them to see a doctor when they are sick, get check-ups, buy medications, and go to the hospital.
- ★ Children with health insurance through Medicaid can get services like early screening and detection that help them manage things like asthma or vision problems, allowing them to participate and succeed in school.
- ★ Medicaid supports low-wage workers who cannot get health insurance through their workplace.
- ★ Medicaid provides temporary help for people who lose a job or become too sick to work.
- ★ Medicaid offers financial protection for working families so that they do not have to go bankrupt when they face an unexpected illness or need to go to the hospital.
- ★ Medicaid makes it possible for local hospitals, clinics, doctors, and schools to provide health services in their community.

Messages to Defend Medicaid

- ★ Cuts to Medicaid have real consequences for our health care providers and system.
 - When people lose health insurance, they still need health care. Without Medicaid coverage, hospitals must provide even more uncompensated care.
 - Taxpayers are left to foot the bill when people do not have access to health coverage.
 - If hospitals are not reimbursed for the care they provide, they are forced to make tough decisions like laying off staff or closing their doors.
- ★ Policymakers are considering a number of new requirements that will layer on even more red tape and government bureaucracy to Medicaid—costing millions in taxpayer dollars.

- ★ Low-income children, working parents, and people with disabilities could lose their health coverage as a result of these new requirements.
- ★ Taking away people's health insurance does nothing to help them find work, lift themselves up, or help them take care of their families.
- ★ Instead of helping working families, many of these proposals will just make life harder.
 - Losing access to Medicaid can have serious consequences for people's health and health care costs. Research shows that living without health coverage means that you are more likely than those with health insurance to be diagnosed with cancer at a later stage, when it is more costly to treat, and patients are less likely to survive.
- ★ Stop the rush to make cuts to Medicaid.

Earned Media

Letter to the Editor Tip Sheet

During the next several months and beyond, ACS CAN and its partners will be working together to help the public, lawmakers and media see the importance of Medicaid in their communities. *Medicaid Covers Us* is a project to dispel misconceptions people have about the program and show the real people who, because of Medicaid, can access the care they need and, as a result, more fully engage with their families and thrive in their workplaces, schools and communities.

Keeping a media drumbeat is a critical component of our project to help people understand just how important Medicaid is for people who need it. While pitching events and other major moments to news outlets to get coverage is important, supplementing this work with letters to the editor is the best way to keep the issue in front of people and hear directly from those in their community about the importance of the program. Below is a guide to help identify powerful voices for letters to the editor and tips to help these spokespeople draft their own letters. Your volunteers' voices are important, and we hope the information below helps guide them through the process of sharing their story with their local media through letters.

If your volunteers' letters get published, please share them with us. We'd love to see their work in print!

Potential Voices for Letters to the Editor

- ★ Medicaid recipient who can speak to what a difference the program has made for their health, quality of life, and ability to participate in their community.
- ★ Health care provider who can speak to what a difference they see Medicaid makes in the lives of their patients.
- ★ Health system/hospital leadership who can speak to how Medicaid helps their system/hospital thrive and continue serving the community; as well as provide jobs in the community.
- ★ Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHC) staff who can speak to how Medicaid helps keep their doors open, improve care coordination, and the quality of care delivered to patients.
- ★ Caregiver of someone on Medicaid who can speak to the services their loved one receives through Medicaid and what a difference it's making for them.
- ★ Social worker who can speak to what it's like helping people look for coverage, the challenges some individuals face who aren't able to access Medicaid because of low eligibility limits, or the benefits they've seen as eligibility for the program expands and more people are able to access care.
- ★ Patient or caregiver of someone dealing with a serious, chronic disease who can speak to how important it is to have access to care and how Medicaid makes that possible for so many individuals who would otherwise be forced to go without or make impossible financial decisions to access care.

Tips for Drafting Letters To the Editor:

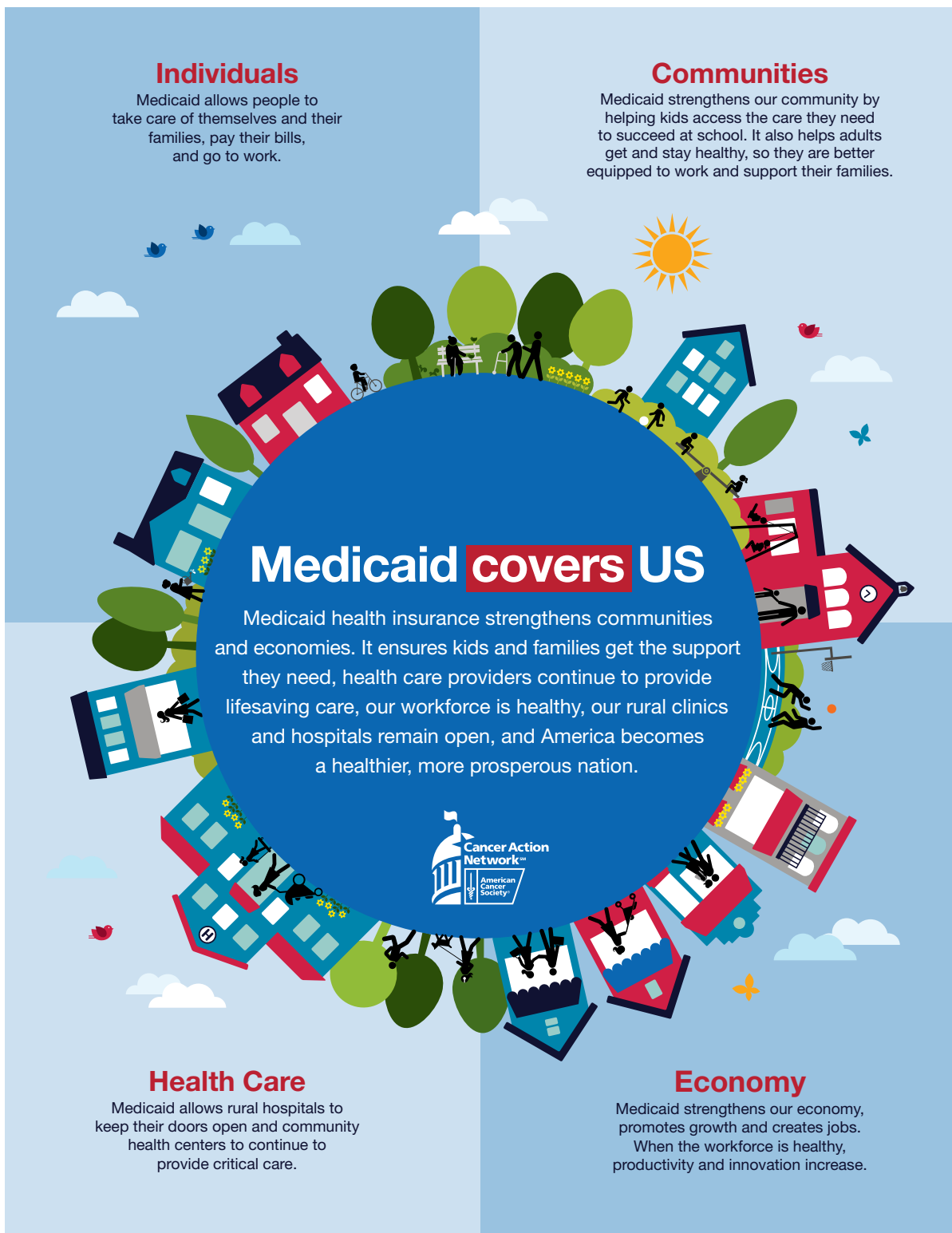
- ★ Watch length: Consider your word count—newspapers typically hold letters to the editor to a 150-250 word maximum, so be sure to check with the paper you're submitting the letter to ahead of time to make sure you're within the allowable word count.
- ★ Be you: What you bring to the discussion that no one else can is your personal story and how Medicaid impacts real people in your community. Briefly explain why Medicaid matters in the context of your personal story.
- ★ Get local: Remember to localize your letter. Editors are looking to show how bigger issues impact your local area.
- ★ Keep it simple: The person reading your letter once it's published may have never heard of this issue before, so write your letter as if you're explaining it to your neighbor for the first time. Avoid acronyms or "inside ballgame" type of language.

- ★ Pick one fact: Try to stick to one key fact. Because we're so passionate about this issue, you may have a lot of information you want to share on it. But if you give too many stats and facts, or facets of your story, they won't stick with your reader. Pick the one or two you think are the most powerful and make your case with those.
- ★ Submit once: Don't submit the same letter to multiple newspapers in the same market – editors don't like to see something from their paper printed in a competing paper and it may hurt your chances of getting published now and in the future.

Letters To the Editor Messaging Points

The messaging section on page 4 covers ACS CAN's project messaging in depth, but below are a few shorter talking points that may make it easier to keep your letter brief.

- ★ Medicaid is a health insurance program for low-income children and adults, seniors, and people with disabilities.
- ★ This program makes it possible for low-income children and adults to see a doctor when they're sick, get regular check-ups, buy medications and access preventive care like cancer screenings.
- ★ Medicaid health insurance helps people manage serious illnesses, including diabetes and cancer.
- ★ Having health insurance through Medicaid helps kids manage chronic issues like asthma or vision problems so they can succeed in school.
- ★ Medicaid supports low-wage workers who cannot get health insurance through their workplace.
- ★ Medicaid provides temporary help for people who lose a job or become too sick to work.
- ★ Medicaid offers families the peace of mind knowing that if one of them gets sick or needs to go to the hospital, they won't be forced to choose between paying medical bills and paying rent or putting food on the table.
- ★ Medicaid makes it possible for local hospitals, clinics, doctors, and schools to provide health services in their community.
- ★ Medicaid covers our senior neighbors on fixed incomes. Medicaid covers the waiter or waitress at our favorite restaurants. Medicaid covers low-income children attending school with our kids. Medicaid helps keep the doors at our local hospital open and our doctors and nurses employed. Medicaid covers our community. *Medicaid Covers US.*



For downloadable version, please click [here](#)

Infographics



"I don't think I would have made it through my breast cancer treatments without this program. **Medicaid** saved my life."

Jaime



"**Medicaid** was a lifesaver for me when I was pregnant and waiting for my new job's insurance to start. It gave me peace of mind knowing we were going to be ok."

Jamila



"**Medicaid** allows patients I serve to have essential health coverage. Without it, they would remain uninsured and be forced to let their diseases go unmanaged, untreated, or undiagnosed leading to detrimental and in some cases fatal outcomes."

Shaundelette



"Because of **Medicaid**, I am able to see the right doctors and get the correct medications to allow me to continue living at home, doing the things I enjoy."

Sandy



"**Medicaid** made it possible for my daughter to get the surgery she needed to start walking."

Peyton

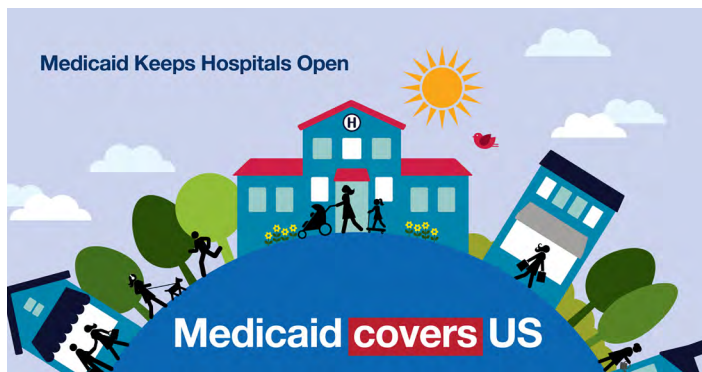
We are your friends,
your neighbors,
your community.

Medicaid covers US



For downloadable version, please click [here](#)

Social Graphics



Post Copy:

Medicaid helps keep hospitals and health clinics open, allowing us to get the critical health care services when and where we need them.

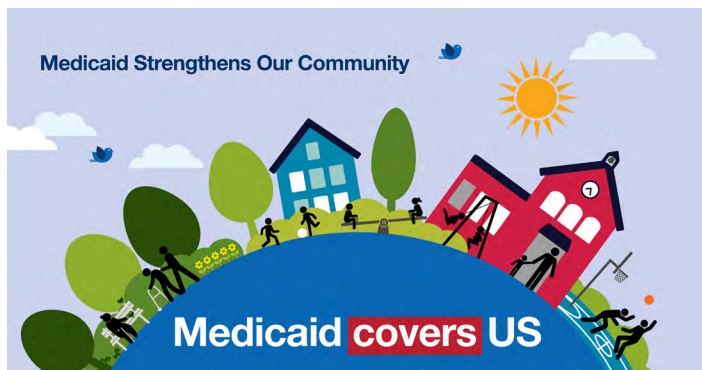
#MedicaidcoversUS



Post Copy:

Medicaid keeps our economy strong, promoting growth and creating jobs. When our workforce is healthy, productivity and innovation increase.

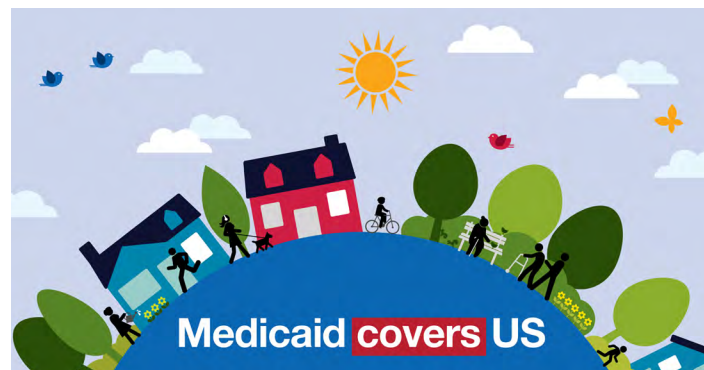
#MedicaidcoversUS



Post Copy:

Medicaid keeps communities strong, so our children grow and succeed in school and businesses have a healthy workforce.

#MedicaidcoversUS



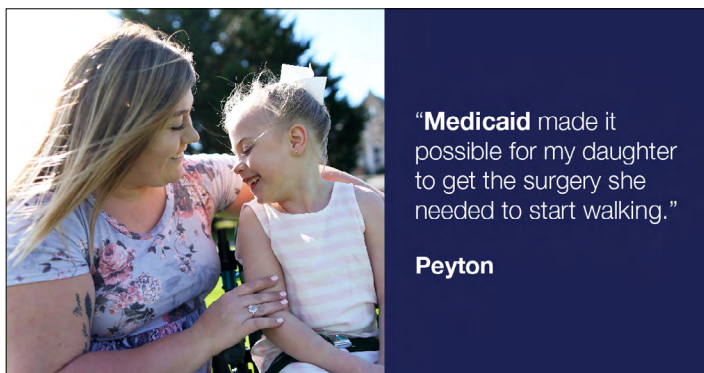
Post Copy:

Medicaid helps adults take care of themselves, so they can work, pay bills, and take care of their families.

#MedicaidcoversUS

For downloadable versions, please click [here](#)

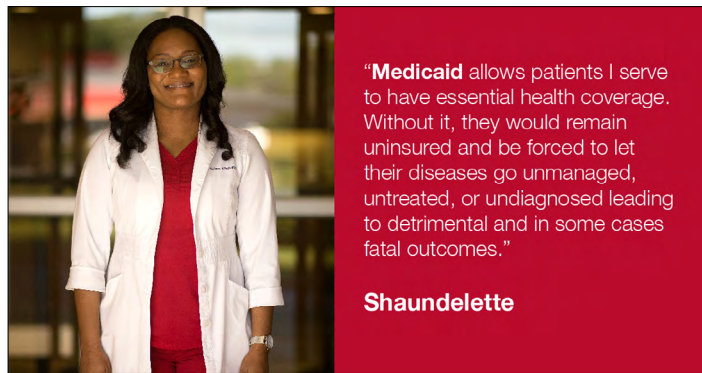
Social Graphics



Post Copy:

Medicaid changes lives every day, giving children and families the care they need.

#MedicaidcoversUS



Post Copy:

Medicaid supports health care providers, saves lives, and creates a healthier America.

#MedicaidcoversUS

For downloadable versions, please click [here](#)



Medicaid is a health insurance program that provides comprehensive and affordable coverage. Medicaid covers some low-income children, working families, seniors, people with disabilities and those living with chronic and serious conditions. It allows people to take care of themselves and their families, providers to deliver high quality care, and communities and local economies to thrive.

Medicaid Provides Critical Care

- ★ Coverage through Medicaid includes office visits, hospitalizations, prescription drugs, and mental health services.
- ★ Preventive services including:
 - Flu shots and other immunizations
 - Pap tests
 - Mammograms
 - Colon cancer screenings
 - Tobacco cessation¹

Medicaid Saves Money

- ★ Hospitals and health systems in Medicaid expansion states have seen significant reductions in uncompensated care costs.²
- ★ These states also experienced lower premiums in their individual health insurance markets.³

Medicaid Strengthens Communities and Local Economies

- ★ Medicaid helps keep rural hospitals open, protecting local jobs and residents' access to timely care.
- ★ Adults can be more productive at work, and kids are positioned to do their best at school.
- ★ Children covered by Medicaid have better health as adults, with fewer hospitalizations and emergency room visits.⁴

Medicaid Provides Peace of Mind

- ★ 2.3 million Americans with a history of cancer have relied on Medicaid for lifesaving and affordable cancer care.
- ★ Medicaid allows people to access the health care they need to care for themselves, their families and loved ones.

Learn More at [FightCancer.org](https://www.fightcancer.org)

¹ <https://www.commonwealthfund.org/publications/issue-briefs/2017/apr/how-medicaid-enrollees-fare-compared-privately-insured-and>
² https://aspe.hhs.gov/system/files/pdf/139226/lb_UncompensatedCare.pdf
³ <https://aspe.hhs.gov/system/files/pdf/206761/McaidExpMktPlPrem.pdf>;
<https://www.kff.org/health-reform/issue-brief/data-note-effect-of-state-decisions-on-state-risk-scores/>
⁴ <https://www.cbpp.org/research/health/medicaid-helps-schools-help-children>; <https://www.nber.org/papers/w20929.pdf>



For downloadable version, please click [here](#)

Storytelling

Storytelling is the core of this project and has proven to be a powerful way to spread our message. The following tips and tricks can help with story collection and storytelling.

Do:

- ★ Tell compelling stories and a lot of them.
- ★ Find ways to bring to light the level/type of need—income levels, services, etc.
- ★ Remind people what the program is and who it serves.
- ★ Use messages that are mapped to target audiences and hyper targeted—by state/county/neighborhood.

Don't:

- ★ Use examples that invite criticism that Medicaid is expansive, expensive, or bloated.
- ★ Ignore concerns about waste, fraud, and abuse.
- ★ Defend the status quo. Look for examples of innovation and efficiency.

Recommended settings for capturing images of storytellers:

- ★ Film in an area with enough lighting.
- ★ Position subject in the middle of the frame.
- ★ If you are filming on a smartphone, camera should be vertical.
- ★ If you are filming on a camera, film in your camera's highest resolution.

