

## Our American Story

Our American Story is a community of low-income families, service providers, and other community leaders working to expand economic opportunity for all through the power of their personal stories. Contributors to Our American Story speak personally about how they or people they know have been helped by child care, nutrition assistance, job training, early learning programs, affordable housing, health coverage, low-income tax credits, and other vital services. The Half in Ten campaign and the Coalition on Human Needs manage the Our American Story network and work to amplify submitted stories by connecting storytellers with action opportunities, the media, policymakers, and other influential audiences.

Contributors to Our American Story submit their stories, either as a short video clip or in written form, to Half in Ten and the Coalition on Human Needs online via this submission form: <http://halfinten.org/stories/submit>. Stories are then posted to the Our American Story website (<http://halfinten.org/stories>) and shared as part of advocacy efforts to protect human needs programs and lay the groundwork for proactive policy helping vulnerable families. The growing Our American Story community currently includes more than 200 storytellers from nearly every state in the country.

## The power of personal stories

Stories bring public policy to life. They show how policy impacts real families and communities around the country. Through storytelling, we remind our leaders that poverty doesn't have one face or take just one form. The stories displayed on the Our American Story website don't just speak to the vital importance of public investments in vulnerable families in expanding economic opportunity to all. They also tell our American story—the desire to create a better life for our families and the next generation, the will to overcome setbacks and challenges, and the importance of being there for one another when we fall on tough times. Our American Story shows that with the right supports, a strong community, and a will to succeed, much is possible.

Personal stories can play a powerful role in shaping public policy and the national debate around social policy issues. Vital supports helping families in need often face the threat of budget cuts. Policymakers and analysts are always looking for ways to improve

The logo for 'Half in Ten' consists of two large, red, stylized quotation marks.

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programs and policies to help families move from poverty to prosperity. But too often, low-income families do not have a seat at the table for the debates that have direct implications for their lives. Half in Ten and the Coalition on Human Needs founded the Our American Story storyteller action network to amplify the voices of low-income Americans in the policy debates of our time.

## Join the Our American Story community

Do you have a story of your own? We'd like to hear it! Half in Ten and the Coalition on Human Needs are looking to grow the Our American Story community. We welcome short video clips or written testimony from anyone who can speak to the important role that the safety net and federal antipoverty programs have in lifting families out of poverty. Most contributors to Our American Story have either personally struggled with poverty (currently or in the past) or are service providers or community leaders who have seen the impact of vital supports on low-income families and their communities. Here are a few of the kinds of stories we're looking for:

### How has the safety net been critical for your family (or families you've served)?

How have nutrition assistance, child care, job training, low-income tax credits, or other supports helped you and your family (include specific examples)? What was life like before you received these supports? What would life be like if your benefits were ended or reduced? (You can tell this story if you're currently receiving benefits or if you have received them in the past.)

### How can the safety net or other policies better help you (or families you've served)?

Are there specific changes that could be made to existing programs to help you get on stronger economic footing? (For example: Don't require families to spend most of their savings to qualify for assistance.) Are there new policies or programs that should be created to better help families? (Such as: Enable workers to take paid time off if they or their loved ones are sick.)

To share your story and join the Our American Story community, visit <http://halfinten.org/stories/submit>. After you submit your story, we will reach out to you to welcome you and follow up with next steps. We are always looking to grow the Our American Story community, so please urge your friends or colleagues who might have a story to share their stories with us. Feel free to contact [info@halfinten.org](mailto:info@halfinten.org) with any questions.

With your help, we can raise our collective voice in support of a strong safety net and do more to help struggling families and communities get back on their feet.

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A project of:

**HALF**  
**in TEN** **10**



COALITION ON HUMAN NEEDS