



# How to Write Effective Testimony for a Legislative Hearing: A Step-by-Step Guide

**Introduction:** Providing testimony at a legislative hearing is a powerful way to influence policymaking. Whether you're an expert in a field or an engaged citizen, well-crafted testimony can make a significant impact. When delivering testimony in-person, your testimony should be short, no longer than 3 to 5 minutes. It is most effective when you speak from your own personal experience.

Developing testimony, both for written submission and oral delivery is an essential part of the public policy process. This guide will walk you through the process of writing compelling and effective testimony for a legislative hearing.

## Step 1: Understand the Context

- Research the legislative issue or bill under consideration.
- Familiarize yourself with the legislative committee, its members, and the hearing process, watching any previous committee hearings if available.
- Identify the key points of the proposed legislation.

## Step 2: Structure Your Testimony

- Begin with a clear and concise introduction.
- State your position and key message upfront—what is your ask?
- Organize the body of your testimony logically, addressing specific points.
- Conclude with a summary and a call to action.

## Step 3: Use Clear and Concise Language

- Avoid jargon and technical language.
- Write in plain language that anyone can understand.
- Keep your testimony within the allotted time (usually a few minutes).

## Step 4: Support Your Claims with Evidence

- Provide data, statistics, and relevant examples to back your statements.
- Cite credible sources and experts.
- Use personal anecdotes or experiences when appropriate.

## Step 5: Focus on the Human Element

- Highlight the real-life impact of the issue or legislation.
- Share personal stories or those of constituents affected.
- Make an emotional connection with the audience.

## Step 6: Address Potential Concerns

- Anticipate and counter arguments against your position.
- Be respectful when discussing opposing viewpoints.
- Provide well-reasoned responses to potential criticisms.

## Step 7: Make Recommendations

- Suggest specific actions or changes to the proposed legislation.
- Offer practical solutions and alternatives.
- Explain the potential benefits of your recommendations.

### **Step 8: Use Engaging Visuals**

- If allowed, include charts, graphs, or visual aids to illustrate your points.
- Ensure these visuals are simple and easy to understand.

### **Step 9: Practice and Time Yourself**

- Rehearse your testimony to ensure clarity and confidence.
- Time yourself to stay within the allocated speaking time.
- Practice in front of a trusted friend or colleague for feedback.

### **Step 10: Submit Your Testimony**

- Follow the legislative committee's guidelines for submitting your testimony (found on the website for the committee).
- Ensure it meets any formatting or document requirements.
- Double-check the deadline for submission.

### **Step 11: Prepare for Questions**

- Expect questions from committee members after your testimony.
- Be ready to provide additional information or clarify your points.
- When answering questions from the committee, first speak through the chairman, “Through the chair, to Representative Smith, to answer your question ...”
- Stay calm and respectful, even if faced with challenging questions.
- Do not be afraid to not know an answer to a specific question. It is perfectly fine to respectfully say “I do not know the answer to that question, but I would like to do some research and share what I find with you.”

### **Step 12: Attend the Hearing**

- Arrive early on the day of the hearing to meet the committee chair and sign in.
- Dress professionally and be respectful to all involved.
- Wait your turn to present your testimony, taking notes on any testimony delivered before you, to avoid repetition.

**Conclusion:** Writing and delivering effective testimony for a legislative hearing can be a pivotal step in shaping public policy. By following these steps and crafting a well-structured, evidence-backed, and compelling testimony, you can have a meaningful impact on the legislative process. Remember, your voice matters, and a well-prepared testimony can make a significant difference in the decisions made by lawmakers.



# Developing Testimony Worksheet

**Introduction:**

**Identify Yourself and establish your credibility on the topic:**

**Develop your personal story on the topic:**

**Develop your main points to support your ask:**

**End with an ask, what do you want the committee to know, and what action are you asking them to take?**

