

Tips to Getting on the Record in Town Hall meetings or Public Hearings

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Why?

- Providing testimony, whether in person or submitted, allows us to have our point of view officially made a part of the record on a given issue. It is one of the most important ways of interacting with legislators, allowing you to impress upon them the urgency, importance, or dangers of specific legislation. Being on the record allows us to point to a specific time and day where we gave our insights and hold legislators accountable for being at least broadly informed.
- This year especially will require our ability to be physically present in hearing rooms, taking what may seem simple and straightforward to us, and making sure that those in a position to advance our arguments can digest them and effectively communicate them with their colleagues. The best way to clear up any misunderstandings is to be there in person, and assist legislators or staff with their questions as they have them.

How?

Leading up to the hearing

- Call ahead to verify location, and again indicate your intention to participate
- Ask if there are any testimony submission guidelines. Does testimony need to be provided in advance? If so, when? How many copies should you expect to provide? Are there formatting issues you must be aware of (submit in a folder, three-hole punch)? What are the time limits to speak and answer questions?
- Most committees allow you to co-testify with someone who has been/would be affected by the proposal. These “real-life” examples are particularly powerful. Bring a long-term care consumer or family caregiver who can effectively put a face on an issue.

- Practice making your points several times, so that you can make eye contact with members while you speak and are not just reading off a paper.
- Contact local reporters and news organizations and explain who you are and why you plan to testify. Provide a copy of your testimony after it has been given or submitted.

Providing Your Testimony

- Expect to provide copies of your remarks to legislators and staff. Customarily, it is addressed to the Committee Chairs and Honorable Members of the Committee.
- Time is generally limited. Make your points, concise and memorable. Explain what you are asking, and why it is important.
- Thank the Committee before you speak, at the end, and if you have time, wait until end of hearing and thank them in person.

Follow-up

- Write a follow up letter to the Committee Chairs offering to provide more expertise or to set up a meeting, continuing the dialogue.