

# How to Submit Statehouse Testimony

## STEP 1

### Learn about the legislation

It is very important to learn about the bill and monitor its movement in committee. Read beyond the news headlines and talking points and actually read the bill itself to understand its content. After reading the bill, seek out different perspectives for and against the legislation to understand all facets of the bill. Then, join the committee's mailing list to receive hearing updates about the bill..

- Read the **bill as-written** (underscored text is new language, strikeouts are deletions)
- Read the **Legislative Services Commission (LSC) Analysis** of the bill
- Watch the **sponsor hearing** and read the sponsor statement for the bill
- Research the positions of trusted, reputable **advocacy organizations and news outlets**
- Join the **committee's mailing list** by contacting the [chair's office](#) via email or phone.

You can find the bills, LSC analysis, and committee information on the Honesty website and the [Ohio Legislature website](#)

## STEP 2

### Decide how you will testify

Testimony is your opportunity to speak directly to an Ohio Representative or Senator and influence how they will respond to legislation under consideration in their committee. In Ohio, there are two different ways testify at the Statehouse: **In-Person** and **Written**

- **In-Person Testimony** is presented live at the Statehouse during the appropriate committee hearing. Hearings are televised live on The Ohio Channel and recorded for later viewing.
- **Written Testimony** is submitted via email to the chair of the host committee and is uploaded to various legislature websites as public record.
- Write your testimony NOW,

## STEP 3

### Prepare your testimony

What is your position on the bill and why? It's best to use your lived experience or professional expertise to support your position. Use these [writing prompts](#) to help shape your testimony. Remember to be concise and focus on 1-2 points in your testimony.

After you've decided your point of view, use this [testimony template](#) to format your testimony. Open by introducing yourself, your title, role, or expertise on the subject matter, and your position on the bill.

#### Tips:

- In-person witnesses are allowed five minutes for their testimony. Be sure to time out your remarks to ensure you're under the five minute mark..
- There is no limit for written testimony; however, committee members tend to stop reading after the second page.

#### Sample Testimony

- Watch in-person testimony - [start 37:35](#)
- Read written testimony - [HERE](#)

## STEP 4

### Submit your testimony

**IMPORTANT:** You must wait for the host committee to announce the hearing before submitting your testimony. Committees may reject your testimony if you submit before a hearing is announced.

You must email this [Witness Slip](#) and your written testimony to the [chair of the committee](#) at least 24 hours in advance of the scheduled hearing.

When emailing your witness slip and testimony to the chair:

- Indicate which bill you are testifying about and your position (opponent or proponent) in the body of your email and on the witness slip
- Send a PDF version of your testimony
- Ask for a confirmation of receipt

## STEP 5

### Presenting In-Person Testimony

#### **PLAN TO ARRIVE EARLY:**

Arrive at the Statehouse well before the hearing is scheduled to begin to secure parking and seating. You can park in the garage underneath the Statehouse or the Columbus Commons Parking Garage.

You must go through a metal detector when you arrive. You can ask the security guards to direct you to the committee room where your hearing is being held.

Be prepared to stay late. Committees usually have multiple bills up for a hearing and can last anywhere from a few minutes to several hours.

#### **READY TO TESTIFY:**

Committee hearings are televised live and recorded for later viewing on [The Ohio Channel](#).

Witnesses are allowed five minutes for testimony.

Speak directly to the Committee, and, if possible, make eye contact rather than read your testimony verbatim.

Be prepared to answer questions. Committee members are allowed to question witnesses after their statements. This is an excellent opportunity to provide greater detail about your perspective or expertise. If you cannot answer a question, it is OK to answer “I do not have that answer” and/or “I am happy to send you that information after the hearing.”

Bring several copies of your printed testimony for your own reference and to share with allies, reporters, or lawmakers, if asked.

**Stage Fright?** Here are some [helpful tips](#) to help alleviate any anxiety around public speaking or addressing lawmakers. REMEMBER, our elected officials work for us. You are exercising your right to speak with public servants who are in the Statehouse to serve you!

#### **Testimony Etiquette**

- Always address the chair first before answering another committee member’s question. For example, “Through the chair to the Representative/Senator
- It is OK if you forget to address the chair

## RESOURCES

Ohio Legislature Website [HERE](#)

Legislative Calendar [HERE](#)

Search for a Bill [HERE](#)

House Committees [HERE](#)

Senate Committees [HERE](#)

Bills As-Written and LSC Analysis can be found on the Document tab of a bill page [Example HERE](#)

Watch committee meetings and hearings on [The Ohio Channel](#)