



Testifying at a Public Hearing in the Legislature

Bring written testimony. It will be read by most Committee members and their staff after the hearing. It's very important to keep it brief. Start with a one-page Summary if it's more than 2 pages.

If you are testifying in person, do NOT read your written testimony - it irks the Committee Chairs and they may halt your testimony. Bring at least two copies of your written testimony. Give one to us and the other to the Committee staff person after you have testified.

Personal testimony is limited to 3 minutes per person by the Committee. They've been known to use a timer and cut people off so practice your key points and stick to the time limit. Do NOT read your written testimony – tell your story directly to the Committee Chairs and Committee members.

We will put some people on a Panel – two or three people we need to testify together. Be aware that Panels only get 5 minutes total to testify. You have to share that 5 minutes with your panel partners so practice your key points and be brief. If you are asked to be on a Panel, please do NOT use the sign-up sheets posted outside the Hearing room.

If you are not on a Panel and want to testify, please sign-up on the Committee's Sign-up Sheet posted outside the hearing room. Contact one of us if you arrive late and the sheet is no longer posted.

Public Hearings usually have many bills being heard on the same day. Hearings often last 4 – 5 hours and more. We have no control over when our bill will be heard and cannot predict when you will get to testify. Please be prepared to arrive at the Hearing Room at least a half-hour before it begins and to stay until it ends. Add another half-hour to get through building security and to find the Hearing Room.

Legislators get to testify whenever they show up. You may be “next in line” but a legislator can be taken ahead of you. It's normal procedure.

The Committee Chairs pride themselves on being fair and neutral. Always address them and the committee directly and respectfully, never address anyone in the audience and do not address opponents in the audience even if they have been inflammatory in their own testimony. We take pride in our earnest, open and honest testimony and presence – and the Committee has appreciated and rewarded that approach over the years.

Finally, this is your chance to tell your story or the story of someone important to you. In this case, you are the expert – the Committee will learn from you and most will be very receptive to hearing from you. Use the few minutes wisely, be brief, be as open as honest as you feel comfortable. Your testimony will have an impact on the bill's success – you're helping make history in Massachusetts – *thank you!*