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How to Draft Legislative Testimony

The following tips are meant to assist you in drafting effective testimony before an agency or legislative body.

Opening

- Include your name, title, and the organization you are with or representing
- Thank the Committee for the opportunity to speak
- Clearly explain what you will be discussing and your position
- Explain your connection to this issue

Body

- This is an opportunity to give background and build out your argument
- The body should be framed based on the set word/page limit length (or time limit if reading the testimony)
 - Testimony time can range from 3 to 15 minutes
- In general, brevity is better
 - Of course, you should explain yourself and your reasoning clearly
 - If you were asked to testify as an expert-witness, you do not need to be as concerned about length, and should feel free to explain things in detail
- Do not just make claims, provide evidence to back up your claims
- Connect you or your organization's policy positions to the evidence you are presenting

Conclusion

- Briefly summarize what you have covered
- Restate your position and what you would like to see the Committee do
- Thank the Committee for the opportunity to testify

Questions From the Committee



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- Many Committees will ask you questions about the topic after your testimony concludes
- Prepare ahead of time for questions you think they may ask
- Keep answers brief and stay on topic
- Try to offer facts rather than opinions unless directly asked by a member of the Committee for your opinion
- Never hesitate to say you do not know the answer to a question, but that you will be happy to follow-up with the Committee with an answer

Submit Your Testimony

- Many legislative bodies require you to submit printed copies of your testimony along with any demonstratives you used to a committee staffer or clerk
- Research the Committee rules beforehand
- Show up to the hearing with multiple printed copies of your testimony
- If virtual, have a pdf of your testimony that you can easily forward to the appropriate staffer or clerk