

Preparing Testimony

Preparing testimony is similar to writing a paper. There is a specific format to follow that includes opening remarks, a body and conclusion. Credible evidence is required, and personal opinions must be eliminated unless specifically asked about.

This guide provides a basic explanation about how to prepare testimony. Because different situations, states, and legislative committees will have differing needs in testimony, the format outlined in this piece can be used as a starting point. If you have questions on specific testimony being prepared, you may contact the Government Affairs staff at govtaffairs@pta.org.

Opening Remarks

- Include your name, title and organization.
- Always thank the committee for the opportunity to speak.
- Clearly state the topic you will be discussing.
- Provide a brief overview of your PTA and why they have a stake in this particular issue.
- Include a one-two sentence thesis statement on what your position is and why.

Note: The thesis statement should be your professional recommendation based on PTA's Public Policy Agenda, resolutions, and/or position statements. Remember, you are representing PTA when giving these remarks, so you should always ensure that your testimony adheres to PTA's policies.

Body

- There is no set limit on length, unless stated otherwise.
 - Cover the topic thoroughly and accurately.
 - The committee will typically provide you with guidelines ahead of time on what the subject is and what they want you to address.
 - Typically, testimony lasts between 5-15 minutes before questions.

- Be sure to provide evidence for your claims. **DO NOT** simply state your opinion.
 - These hearings are to determine the course of law. It is important that the committee and public hear factual accounts of what the legislation would impact.
 - Providing evidence gives credibility to your testimony and garners respect for you as a PTA leader.
- Be sure to connect PTA positions and public policy recommendations to the evidence. This allows legislators to clearly see why PTA advocates for the policy position they have taken.

Conclusion

- Briefly recount what you have covered.
- Restate your position and provide a recommendation for action.
- Finish by thanking the committee again.

Questions From the Committee

After your testimony, you will likely have a question and answer session from the committee. Keep the following guidelines in mind when answering questions:

- Do your homework ahead of time. The committee may ask you questions that fall outside the testimony you just gave. Make sure you are prepared to answer questions that pertain to the entire scope of the committee's hearing.
- Keep answers brief but thorough and stay on topic.
- Stick to the facts. Avoid offering an opinion unless directly asked by a committee member to provide one.
- If you do not know the answer to a question, be honest about it. Offer to follow up with the committee once you have obtained an answer. It is better to admit to being unsure about a question than to give false information.



After the Hearing

The committee will likely ask you to submit your testimony and all supplementing materials for the record. Find out how this is done, as the process varies. Sometimes it is submitted to a committee staffer, and sometimes the committee has a parliamentarian or legal advisor that takes testimony. Ensure that you are fully aware of the process before leaving the hearing so that you can follow procedure. Make sure your testimony and all supplemental items are neatly typed before submitting, and offer your business card or contact information to the committee staff so they can follow up with any questions.

Submitting Testimony Without Testifying

Some committees permit organizations to submit testimony even without the invitation to testify. Contact committee staff for guidelines if your PTA is interested in submitting testimony.



everychild.onevoice.[®]

PTA National Headquarters

1250 N. Pitt Street
Alexandria, VA 22314

Toll-Free: (800) 307-4PTA (4782)

Fax: (703) 836-0942

E-mail: govtaffairs@pta.org

PTA.org