

Testimony Outline and Tips NASW/Texas

Part I: Introduction

- Introduce yourself to the committee members and greet them in a professional and polite manner.
- Use this space to say whether you are representing yourself as a private citizen, your employer, or a coalition/advocacy group. (*Note: some employers forbid employees from representing themselves as an employee when providing testimony to legislators. Check with your Human Resources manager to see if your employer has any restrictions.*)
- The last sentence of your introduction should clearly state your position: In Support of/In Opposition to/Neutral (just providing information). Be sure to mention the full name of the bill!

Example: Good afternoon, Madame Chairwoman and members of the Senate Finance Committee. My name is John Smith from Austin, and I am here representing myself as a constituent of Madame Chairwoman's district. I am opposed to SB 1234, and I urge the committee to not let this harmful bill go any further.

Part II: Defending your stance

- Explain your stance on the bill or issue being heard clearly and concisely.
- Telling a quick personal or professional anecdote can help strengthen your argument. If the topic being discussed is an emotional one for you, try to steer yourself away from overly emotional words or stories.

Example: SB 1234 is a harmful bill because it would outlaw coffee in places of employment. As a licensed social worker, I drink coffee every day, sometimes at work. According to Dunkin Donuts, social work is one of the top 10 professions with the highest consumption of coffee. Allowing this bill to pass would place myself and my colleagues at risk of caffeine withdrawal every day.

Part III: Recommendations

- If you have any recommendations for the committee or group hearing your testimony on, create a separate section so it is easy to reference quickly.

Example: I would like to share the following recommendation with the committee:

- Replace "outlaw" in the line 5, "outlaw coffee and coffee products in places of employment" with "require coffee and coffee products in places of employment."

Part IV: Closing

- Take a few moments to summarize your key points and recommendations.
- Thank the committee members for their time.
- After you're done, wait a few seconds to see if anyone has any questions. If you don't know the answer to a question you are asked, tell the person you do not know but you will get the answer to them.

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Example: In summary, I would like to once again say that the passage of SB 1234 would be detrimental to social workers, coffee growers, and everyone that enjoys a good cup of joe at work. I stand in support of any bills that get more coffee to the people that need it the most: social workers. Thank you for your time.

Tips

- The standard allotted time for testimony is three minutes. If you are signaled to end your testimony, finish your sentence and thank the committee.
- Bring 10-15 copies of your testimony with you so the staff can pass out copies to the committee members. Use the copies of your testimony to expand on your arguments, include charts or graphs, and supply references that you wouldn't be able to touch on in three minutes.
- Most hearings let you submit written testimony as well as provide oral, if you're not able to stay at the hearing until public comments are heard. Also, most legislative hearings let you submit position cards as an easy way to show your opposition or support without submitting formal testimony.
- Know your stuff! Researching the topic beforehand and anticipating possible questions will help you remain calm if you are asked questions about your testimony.
- Wondering how to address legislators? The head of the committee is addressed as Mr. Chairman or Madam Chairwoman. The other members of the committee and other legislators can be addressed as Senator, Representative, or Mr./Mrs./Ms. If you are writing a formal letter to a legislator, it should be addressed to "The Honorable (full name)." Emily Post has great information online about how to address various government officials, if you need more information.
- Offer your expertise and experience to the committee or group members outside of the hearing, and leave a phone number or email address with your testimony. Legislators count on the public to help guide their actions, and as a social worker, you have years of experience to share!