

How to Prepare Yourself Before Testimony on a Bill

NOTE OF ADVICE: Since most Connecticut legislative hearings address multiple bills, there may be large numbers of people signing up to testify. Plan to arrive 2-3 hours before the hearing so you can sign up toward the beginning of the list.

- Written notes will reassure, help you remember the points you want to make. Highlighting your main points will help ensure that you cover them all.
- If possible, sit in on another hearing before your big day. This will give you a feel for the process, and an idea of what works well and what doesn't.
- Conduct research for data that will support your position.
- Prepare handouts for statistical documentation, supporting articles, diagrams, etc. It makes you look prepared and more like an expert.
- Make sure you know that you want to say. Practice your testimony out loud until you can deliver your message in less than five minutes.
- Meet with your representatives in advance if you can.
- Dress appropriately; it matters. You don't need a three-piece suit.
- Breathe deeply and relax! Deep, slow breaths can calm your racing heart. Remember, stage fright is natural. The key is to find a focal point to concentrate on so that fear doesn't overwhelm you.
- Listen to those who go before you so you won't repeat that they have said. Sitting through a dozen people saying the same things, over and over again, just annoys your entire audience. Your audience will appreciate your concern for their time.

Adapted from Connecticut Association of Non-Profits