

KEY FACTS ABOUT COMMITTEE HEARINGS

As you decide whether or not to get involved in changing laws and how that might look for you, it might be helpful to know more about hearings. Below is a list of things you can do when it comes to public committee hearings in Nebraska.



When attending a hearing, you can...

- Attend the hearing even if you are disenfranchised (can't vote in the U.S.), formerly incarcerated, have a criminal history, are a non-citizen, undocumented person, nonresident, or a minor.
- Attend the hearing and not testify.
- Attend the hearing with the purpose of testifying and decide not to testify
- Leave the hearing at any point; you do not have to stay for the whole hearing.
- Decline to answer questions from anyone, for any reason.



When communicating with senators, you can...

- Reach out to most senators by email, phone, or in person at any time.
- Reach out to senators before hearings to let them know if you are planning to be at the hearing and your opinion on the bill – most senators really appreciate this.
- Request to pull senators from floor debate and speak with them personally about a bill they are hearing later. This may be a good option if you aren't sure you will stay for a hearing.



When submitting written testimony, you can...

- Send a letter to the committee chairperson in support, opposition, or neutral capacity to be added to the public record during the hearing. If you are sending a letter, you must do this by 5pm on the last business day (Monday through Friday) before the scheduled hearing, whether you plan to testify in-person or not.
- Send a letter to the committee, or for someone else to read on your behalf, even if you are disenfranchised (can't vote in the U.S.), formerly incarcerated, have a criminal history, are a non-citizen, undocumented person, nonresident, or a minor. Your letter must include your full legal name.



You may be able to send a letter for someone else to read on your behalf at the hearing, and you can check with the chairperson of the committee to be sure. If you are able to send a letter for someone to read on your behalf, you do NOT need to provide your full legal name if it is not safe for you to do so. You will need to determine ahead of time who will be reading your letter, such as a friend or someone from an organization such as Survivors Rising.



When testifying in person, you can...

- Testify in-person and attend hearings even if you are disenfranchised (cannot vote in the U.S.), formerly incarcerated, have a criminal history, are a non-citizen, undocumented person, nonresident, or a minor.
- Submit written testimony to senators and say something completely different when you share on the record.
- Change your mind about testifying while you are testifying, stop your testimony, and excuse yourself.
- Let the senators know if you are open to answering questions later and give your contact information to them so they can reach out to you after the hearing.
- Refuse to speak to members of the press, whether you testify or not.
- Identify yourself on your testifier sheet, and when you testify, without using your full legal name if it is not safe for you to give your full name (NOTE: this is NOT the case if you are sending in written testimony. See above).



You may be able to have a support person sit with you as you testify. You will want to check with the committee chairperson ahead of time, and if it is okayed, you will want to identify them to the committee as a person who is there to support you when you begin your testimony.

Resources

- List of Committees: <https://nebraskalegislature.gov/committees/committees.php>
- Find your Senator: https://nebraskalegislature.gov/senators/senator_find.php
- If you need someone to read a letter on your behalf, reach out to Survivors Rising (<https://survivorsrisingomaha.org/>) or Coalition for a Strong Nebraska (<https://strongnebraska.org/>)

“Key Facts about Committee Hearings” is part of *Survivors Speak: How to share your story to advocate for legislative change in Nebraska*. For more information about how you can share your story to advocate for change, check out the full guide at <https://survivorsrisingomaha.org/survivors-speak/>. Please do not reproduce or alter without express written permission from Survivors Rising.