

TIPS FOR WRITING TESTIMONY

Whether you are planning to share your testimony in person, send it by email for the record, or ask someone to read it on your behalf, writing testimony can be intimidating. Below are some tips to help guide you as you prepare to write your opinion or story for a hearing.

	Spoken Testimony	Written Testimony for the Record	Written Testimony for a Reader
What You Need to Know	<p>If you are planning to testify, it can be helpful to write what you plan to say ahead of time. If you do that make sure to print 12-15 copies of your written testimony to give to the committee at the hearing.</p>	<p>If you would like to send testimony for the record, you must send it by email to the Committee chairperson by 5pm on the last business day before the hearing is scheduled. For example, your email must be sent by 5pm the Friday before if a hearing is scheduled for Monday. You can find contact information for the committee chairperson on the Nebraska Legislature website.</p> <p>If you are submitting your letter by email directly to the committee chair for the record, you will need to include your legal name and address on the letter. You will also need to clearly state whether you are for, against, or neutral about the bill.</p>	<p>Sometimes committees allow testimony to be read by someone else on your behalf. If you aren't sure if this will be allowed, contact the chairperson of the committee. If you are able to have another person read your testimony, you will want to connect with them at least one business day before the hearing</p> <p>Make sure to note on your testimony that you give permission for your statement to be read on your behalf.</p> <p>You do not have to use your name if someone else is reading for you. You can simply identify yourself as 'a concerned citizen unable to be present' or in some other way that shows you have an interest in this bill.</p> <p>No matter how you identify yourself, make sure you lay out how to pronounce the name or title you use. This way the reader doesn't say it incorrectly on the record.</p>
Content	<p>Ask yourself what you want others to remember when you are done speaking, and write down the three most important things as bullet points.</p> <p>Add as much personal detail beneath each point as you are comfortable with, and focus on writing down what supports that point.</p>	<p>You don't need to tell your whole story for your words to have an impact. Keep your focus on why the bill is important to you, and write about that, this will help senators better understand your position.</p>	<p>When writing for someone else to read, focus your content on what you really want the committee to know. If time for testimony gets shortened for some reason, the reader may need to summarize your testimony instead of reading it exactly as it is written.</p> <p>Take out words that might be tough for someone else to</p>

	Spoken Testimony	Written Testimony for the Record	Written Testimony for a Reader
Length	<p>You don't need to tell your whole story in order for your words to have an impact. Find the parts of your story that connect the most with the reasons the bill is important to you and use those.</p> <p>You only have 3 to 5 minutes to share your thoughts on the bill. When you edit your testimony, leave what you want the committee to know. Your testimony should about one page when typed.</p>	<p>Writing for public record is similar to writing like you are going to testify, but you aren't limited in what you write. However, it is still a good idea to keep what you are writing to the point, so what is important to you doesn't get lost.</p>	<p>pronounce. Check a thesaurus or use the 'synonyms' function for words that may be easier to say.</p> <p>Try to limit yourself to less than one page and focus on what is most important to you. This way the reader doesn't have to guess about what is most important to you, and can focus on getting your point across.</p>
Format	<p>Make the print large with space in between so there is room for making notes if you need them.</p>	<p>Formatted like a formal letter. Include the date, name, and address of the committee Chairperson at the top.</p>	<p>Make the print large with space in between. If the reader needs to make notes, it is helpful to have space for this.</p>

Practice	<p>No matter what option you choose, practice reading your testimony aloud. Notice how you feel, how long it took to read, and how it sounded to you. Make changes and adjustments until you are comfortable, you feel your points are clear, and it is readable in about two minutes.</p>
Self-Care	<p>Some parts of your story may be tough and overwhelm you. If there is something you wrote that is too hard to talk about, think about cutting it out for now and sharing it at another time. Give yourself time to take care of yourself and use your coping skills while you are writing. If you need suggestions, see "Tips for Taking Care of Yourself" in <i>Survivors Speak</i>.</p>

Resources

- Committee Contact Information: <https://nebraskalegislature.gov/committees/standing-committees.php>
- Search for a Hearing: https://nebraskalegislature.gov/calendar/hearings_range.php

“Tips for Writing Testimony” 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.