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TESTIFYING AT A COMMITTEE HEARING:

10 simple suggestions to make it easier to get involved

1

ARRIVE EARLY

Getting to the meeting early will give you a chance to survey the terrain, identify legislators, and to make last-minute changes to your presentation.

2

CONTACT THE COMMITTEE'S ADMINISTRATOR OR LEGISLATIVE ASSISTANT

If you want to testify, make sure you are on the committee meeting agenda. It's best to contact the committee a day or two before the hearing to do this.

3

INTRODUCE YOURSELF

When speaking to the committee, identify yourself and the organization you represent, if any. Then clearly state your position on the bill before the committee.

4

SPEAK THROUGH THE COMMITTEE CHAIR

All questions and answers during committee hearings are routed through the committee chair. Address the chair as "Madame Chair" or "Mr. Chair."

5

DON'T BE INTIMIDATED

This is a citizen Legislature. Representatives are your friends and neighbors and they want to hear what you have to say. Just state your case clearly and in simple terms as you would to anyone.

6

BE BRIEF

Make key points as concisely as possible. Provide specific information about why your position is in the state's best interest, what the costs might be, and what groups support or oppose your proposal.

7

BE PREPARED TO ANSWER QUESTIONS

The best way to make your case is to provide straightforward answers to legislators' questions. If you don't know the answer, say so. If possible, find the answer and pass it on to committee members.

8

WRITTEN SUMMARIES

Some legislators say a clearly written letter, or issue sheet, is the most effective way of gaining support. Consider having copies of a concise summary of your key points.

9

OFFER TO HELP

Citizens play a key role in shaping state policy. Ask if there is anything you can do to help get the proposal in question approved or defeated.

10

MUTUAL RESPECT

Your views are important and you have a right to be treated courteously, as do legislators. There are sides to every issue and each one has merit. Understand the difficult position legislators have in reaching decisions.

Suggestions courtesy of www.nofas.org