



# Ohio Children's Alliance

*Leading change for child and family service providers*

## Providing Legislative Testimony: A Guide

Once you have found the [legislation](#) you would like to provide testimony on, you can begin the process. Please utilize the following tips when considering testifying on a state bill. Additionally, please reach out with any questions and check out our [legislative testimony template](#).

### ***Committee Location***

All legislative committees, House and Senate alike, convene at the [Ohio Statehouse](#). The building has security procedures which you can read about [here](#).

### ***Parking***

[The Statehouse Parking Garage](#), connected to both the Riffe Center and Statehouse, often fills up quickly. However, there are many other parking lots within walking distance you can use which we have identified [here](#).

### ***Top Ten Tips for Writing Legislative Testimony***

1. **Make Sure to Contact the Sponsor or Committee Chair First.** Their staff will help you navigate the process of providing testimony and any additional documents. They will also keep you apprised of when committee dates and times are so you can make your travel plans, should you wish to testify in person. You can find who the sponsor(s) are and what committee the legislation is in on the General Assembly website linked above.
2. **Determine if Your Testimony Will Be In-Person or Written-Only.** You do not have to travel to the Statehouse to weigh in on legislation! If your schedule does not allow for you to provide in-person testimony, let the legislative office you are communicating with know and they will assist you in submitting your remarks for the committee to review. If you are able to provide testimony in person, you must still provide written comments ahead of time.
3. **Structure Testimony Properly.** If your organization does not have letterhead, make sure to include your organization's logo in your testimony. Begin your testimony by thanking the Chair [name], Vice Chair [name], Ranking Member [name], and committee members. You can view House committees, their leadership and members [here](#) and the same Senate information [here](#).

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4. **Introduce yourself and your organization.** Provide information about who you are, the organization you represent, as well as your credentials and the populations you serve.
5. **Focus on Key Points.** Identify whether you are a proponent, opponent, or interested party. If you are not sure what your stance is, please contact us and we can help you! After you establish your position, clearly state it and have 2-3 talking points to support it. Talking points should be a mixture of facts as well as your own unique perspective. Your testimony should not be more than two pages unless the legislation is particularly long. Make sure that if you provide opponent or interested party testimony to remain respectful and productive, and offer alternative ideas if possible.
6. **Consider Providing Supporting Documentation.** If you have fact sheets, articles, or other documentation to support your point, consider submitting those as well as your testimony. Having the documentation with you will add validity to your testimony and help save time in your actual remarks.
7. **Make it Personal.** Try to use common terms and language. Most legislators do not understand technical language or industry jargon. Explain the potential impact on the district as well as the system as a whole. Talk about how quality and accessibility of care are being affected at your organization. From your perspective, explain why you think it is important to act and why the child welfare or behavioral health system benefits as a whole from your ideas.
8. **End the Testimony on a High Note.** Thank the legislators for taking the time to listen/read to your testimony. Offer to answer any further questions they may have and be a resource regarding child welfare or behavioral health issues in the future. Leave your name, address, email address, affiliation, and telephone number at the bottom of the testimony.
9. **Get a Release for Pictures and Videos.** If you provide in-person testimony and you decide to have a picture or video taken of yourself while you testify by a friend or colleague attending with you (which we highly recommend) make sure you ask the Committee Chair's office for a picture/video release document and fill it out prior to committee. Committee rules dictate that no outside media is allowed unless approved by the Chair's office.
10. **Share What Happened.** Share pictures and details from your experience testifying on social media, in your newsletter, or on your website. When possible, tag your legislator in the posts and share pictures. Please also share your experience with us so we can promote it and help with any follow-ups.

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