

How to Testify on a Bill Before Colorado Legislative Committee

Signing in.

Hearings usually start on time, but it is best to arrive 30 minutes early, especially for committees that meet Upon Adjournment. In order to testify, it is important that you sign in at the beginning of the hearing or as soon as possible. Each bill on the agenda will have a sign-in sheet that is located on or near the committee table. Fill out all of the information including whether you are in support of the bill, against the bill, or neutral. If you are not representing an organization, write that you are representing yourself. If you have any questions, please ask a member of Legislative Council Staff, who wear red name badges. If you have handouts or copies of your testimony for the committee, give these to staff at the beginning of the hearing or before you speak.

Testifying.

The order of bills to be heard is posted outside the door of each committee that is meeting. The chair will announce each bill, after which the bill's sponsor will address the committee. The chair may then ask for testimony from proponents and opponents. Hearings are conducted using formal parliamentary procedure. You may find the following recommendations to be helpful.

- Begin your presentation by stating, "Mr. or Madam Chair ____, members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to present to you today. My name is ____, representing ____, and I am here to support/oppose this bill because . . ."
- Do not read your testimony word for word.
- Be brief and avoid repeating what other witnesses have said. Try to focus on points that have not been mentioned.
- At the end of your testimony, thank the committee members and offer to answer any questions.
- If a member asks a question, wait for the chair to prompt you, then state your name followed by, "Chair ____, Senator/Representative ____, the answer to your question is . . ." If you do not know the answer, it is always okay to say that you do not know. If you promise to follow-up, be sure to do so in a timely manner.
- Do not be offended if committee members come and go during a hearing. They have other commitments, including the presentation of bills in other committees that are meeting simultaneously.
- At a hearing with a large number of witnesses, there may not be time for everyone to testify.
- Cell phones and other electronic devices should be on a silent setting.
- Food and beverages are prohibited in the committee rooms.
- The chair has the discretion and authority to limit testimony, ask the sergeant-at-arms to remove a disruptive person from the committee, and clear the public from any hearing in the event of a disturbance which is disruptive to legislative proceedings.

Remote testimony.

During the 2018 legislative session, five sites will be available for remote testimony for specific bill hearings: Colorado Mesa University in Grand Junction, Otero Junior College in La Junta, Fort Lewis College in Durango, Trinidad Junior College in Trinidad, and Adams State University in Alamosa. Any legislator may request remote testimony for a bill, but the request must be approved by legislative leadership.

If you wish to testify remotely, you will need to sign up through the General Assembly's registration website. Bills available for remote testimony will be indicated on the registration website, as well as the House and Senate calendars. In order for a remote testimony site to be available for testimony, at least one witness must be registered to testify at the site at least 24 hours before the hearing on the previous business day. The deadline is 10:00 a.m. for committees scheduled to meet Upon Adjournment. If at least one witness is registered by the deadline, additional witnesses may continue to sign up on-line to testify remotely until one hour before the scheduled hearing time and may sign up at the remote testimony site until public testimony on the bill concludes.

Please note that there is no guarantee that all witnesses, including remote witnesses, will be permitted to testify on a bill, or that remote witnesses will be able to testify at a specific time