Tips for Providing Public Testimony

OFFICE OF Community & Civic Life

Preparing Your Testimony

Before the Meeting:

- Research! Understand the context and purpose of the meeting. Focus on one issue per meeting. Keep your testimony relevant to the meeting topic.
- Practice! Verbal testimony is limited to 2-3 minutes per person. Read from an outline, not a script.
- Organize! Organize your community to testify. More people testifying = more impact. More and different communities = more impact.

Some Dos and Don'ts:

- Testimony is public record; only share things you are comfortable with everyone knowing.
- Be respectful, clear, and sincere.
- You can give praise relevant to the issue; avoid criticisms targeted at any one person.

Personalized testimony is the most effective!

Sign up to provide testimony at portland.gov/auditor/council-clerk/engage-council

OFFICE OF Community & Civic Life

Tips or Providing Public Testimony

Why Provide Written Testimony?

Providing written testimony creates a written record that decision-makers can refer back to at a later time. Generally, written testimony should be no longer than one page (or 530 words).

Why Provide Verbal Testimony?

Verbal testimony allows you to speak directly to decision-makers and emphasize the personal impact of the issue on you and your community. Personalized testimony is the most effective.

Providing Your Testimony

1. Introduce yourself and your topic
- Give your first and last name; identify how you are connected to the issue being discussed.
- Describe your testimony topic and make a specific request of decision-makers.

2. Tell your story
- Tell how you have worked directly on, or been directly impacted by, the issue.
- Make a connection to between the impact of the issue and what services caused the issue.
- Tell why you are sharing your story and what you want the decision-makers to learn from it.

3. Give suggestions
- Don't assume the decision-makers understand the issues and what to do about them.
- Explain the benefits of addressing the issue.
- Offer ideas for preventing negative experiences or increasing positive experiences.
- Know the rules and regulations about this issue and quote them to decision-makers.

4. Wrap things up
- Restate your request for decision-makers to consider.
- Thank the members of the decision-making body for their time and consideration.

To learn more about engagement resources and Civic Life's Neighborhood Program, visit portland.gov/civic/myneighborhood

Promote the Common Good: The Office of Community & Civic Life is building stronger communities by supporting and empowering Portlanders. We think, act, and partner with our communities to better understand and take care of their diverse needs and invite you to join us