

HOW TO TESTIFY

In order to hear from as many people as possible, the legislature places strict time limits on every testifier who comes to the Ways & Means Roadshow. As a result, your testimony must be brief and to the point in order for the legislature to hear your story.

This template is meant to help you form and deliver powerful testimony about the programs and services that matter most to you:

- 1. State who you are and the program or service that you came to advocate for.** *Ex: "My name is ____ and I am here to urge the legislature to continue funding Temporary Assistance for Needy Families, at it's current level, which helps support my family of 4." OR "I am __, a 10th grade history teacher, and I am here to urge the legislature to finally fund our public schools at the level our students deserve"*
- 2. Say explicitly that our funding crisis is caused by the choice Oregon has made to have the lowest corporate taxes in the country. We now have a new choice: Ask corporations to pay their fair share in taxes, or cut the programs that Oregonians rely on.** *Ex: "Because our state chooses to allow corporations not to pay their fair share of taxes in Oregon, funding for TANF, which ensures the very health and wellness of Oregon families like mine, is in jeopardy." OR "Our leaders have a choice: Ask corporations to pay their fair share, or allow Oregon to continue having some of the largest classrooms, fewest electives, and lowest graduation rates in the country."*
- 3. Talk about how this program does or would personally impact you, your family, or the people you serve.** *Ex: "Without support from TANF, I would often have to choose between paying my electric bill or having food on the dinner table for my children." OR "The students I teach don't have access to the kinds of programs that kept me engaged in school as a student. If we invested in programs like band, PE, and robotics, I know my students would be more excited about school and be more likely to graduate."*
- 4. Close by reminding the committee that they have a choice.** *Ex: "I urge you to choose the wellbeing of families like mine over the profits of some of the world's largest corporations." OR "I think the choice is clear. It's time that the world's largest corporations pay their fair share to help Oregon's students."*

TIPS FOR HOW TO TESTIFY

Giving public testimony before the budget committee can be exciting and fulfilling, especially if you are well-prepared. Your testimony may influence the committee's action; It also becomes part of the permanent record and may be used in future research.

Here are some suggestions to help make your testimony successful:

1. **Be ready to go as soon as your name is called.** You won't have another chance to be called up to testify, so stay nearby and have your notes ready.
2. **Make your story personal.** Legislators want to hear from you about how budget decisions will affect you, your loved ones, or the people you serve. Personal details about what a program means to you will be more memorable than facts, figures, or platitudes.
3. **Be sure to frame the problem as a choice.** It is important to say that the state is making a choice between cutting the programs and services Oregonians rely on and asking corporations to pay their fair share
4. **Prepare to stay within the time limits.** Write out and practice your testimony beforehand to make sure all your key points will get across in the time that the committee allots you (probably only 2 or 3 minutes.)
5. **Be respectful.** Remember to thank the committee for the opportunity to testify. Don't accuse committee members of causing your particular problem. Resist the temptation to scold, put down, or insult the decision makers or other testifiers.