



Consumer Council System of Maine
A Voice for Consumers of Mental Health Services

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What to expect at a Legislative Public Hearing...

Testifying before a committee:

Persons wanting to offer testimony to a committee **may do so by attending the meeting in person in the committee room or by registering to testify over Zoom** using the testimony submission portal. **(See below under “What to Prepare”).**

What to prepare...

Testifying in-person before a committee: Please bring **20 hard copies** of your testimony for the committee. **PLEASE DO NOT** upload your testimony through the portal if you are planning to testify in the committee room. You should expect to be at the State House longer than the scheduled time as public hearings often run late. Unless otherwise specified by the chairs, such as in the case of large public hearings, no pre-registration is required for in-person hearing testimony.

Testifying online using zoom: Please register to give testimony via zoom no later than 30 minutes prior to the scheduled start of that day’s hearing(s). Once that registration is complete, you will receive additional information regarding acquiring a Zoom meeting link that can be used to join the meeting remotely during the public hearing. When you sign on to the zoom meeting you will only be able to see the committee members (that’s how it’s supposed to be! Don’t worry!). The committee will bring you onto the screen to testify when it is your turn!

If you would like to provide oral testimony before the committee via zoom, you should register through the online portal <https://www.mainelegislature.org/testimony/> Make sure to fill out all required fields and **check the “I would like to present my testimony live” box.**

Submitting written testimony online: If you are looking to **only provide written testimony:** upload the document or type out your comment in the provided space in the online portal <https://www.mainelegislature.org/testimony/> Make sure to fill out all required fields but leave **the “I would like to present my testimony live” box unchecked.** You will receive an acknowledgement email letting you know your submission was successful.

At the hearing...

Every hearing begins with the bill sponsor introducing their bill. Next, any legislators testifying will be given the opportunity to speak. Next, members of the public can talk. Sometimes the committee chairs (Senator and Representative) will go back-and-forth between proponents and opponents; other times it is all one, then the other. Usually, it depends on how many people wish to testify.



The Committee Chairs will start the hearing by introducing the Committee. Legislators who sponsor the bill testify first. Then the public will be invited to testify, and testifiers will be announced by name in an order designated by the clerk or committee chairs if you are testifying via zoom.

At the hearing, you do not need to read exactly what you write. **You will have 3 minutes** to speak, but there is no limit on the length of written testimony that you submit. Testimony from the public tends to be one to two pages long. One of the chairs of the committee will watch the time and will ask you to wrap up if you take longer than 3 minutes. You may want to practice reading your testimony out loud and see how long it takes so you know what you can say in 3 minutes.

When it's your turn to speak....

Introduction: "Senator Representative and honorable members of the Joint Standing Committee on _____ my name is _____, I am a resident of _____ and I am here today to testify in favor of/in opposition to/neither for nor against LD_____.

In favor of: List reasons why you support the bill.

In opposition to: List reasons why you are opposed to the bill.

Neither For Nor Against: List concerns or suggestions you might have about the bill being heard.

Key messages: Pick one or two -- just one sentence on each.

Story: Tell a story that illustrates your main point.

Closing: Reinforce your key message (again, just a sentence) and thank the committee. You can then say you would be happy to answer any questions they might have. If you don't know the answer, you can say that you would be willing to get back to them later with a response.

Work sessions and other committee meetings:

For committee work sessions and other committee meetings (e.g., committee orientation, committee briefings, etc.), persons wanting to observe such meetings may do so in person or using the video streaming options described below in the livestream section. Participation by interested parties and members of the public at work sessions and other committee meetings will be by invitation only and at the discretion of the chairs, including the manner of participation (in-person or electronic).

Livestream (and archive) of committee meetings:

Committee meetings are now livestreamed using the Legislature's streaming service (not YouTube). You may access the livestream (or archive) by going to the date of the committee meeting on the Legislature's Calendar: (<https://legislature.maine.gov/Calendar/>).

Persons in need of accommodations should contact the Legislative Information Office as soon as possible at (207) 287-1692 or lio@legislature.maine.gov

For questions you can always call the Legislative Information Office at 1-800-301-3178