So you want to submit testimony on the budget bill. Great! The following document will show you how almost all written testimony is built and provide you with basic tools to write your own testimony.

In 2019, when the last state budget was being considered at the Ohio Statehouse, there were more than 1,500 testimonies submitted in the House and the Senate. There were more than 700 individual testimonies in the House. As you can imagine, getting your voice heard is difficult when everyone is talking. To make this even more challenging, every individual who showed up to testify was asked to keep their comments brief, to allow for everyone else to have a turn.

So how do you make your case when you only have a few minutes in a crowd of hundreds? It’s very simple: Be Direct, Be Clear, and Be Yourself!

What does normal testimony look like?

EXAMPLE (not based on real budget)

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Header (Name of Committee, Date, and Bill, and Name) | House Finance Subcommittee on Health and Human Services  Wednesday, March 3, 2021  House Bill ?? – State Budget  John Doe |
| Introduction (Address the Chair, Introduce yourself and your position on the bill)  BE DIRECT | Chairman Roemer, Ranking Member West and members of the House Finance Subcommittee on Health and Human Services, my name is John Doe and I’m here to testify in support of the budget for the Ohio Department of Transportation.  OR  Chairman Roemer, Ranking Member West and members of the committee, my name is John Doe and I am here to talk about the budget for Medicaid. While there are several things to like in the budget you have in front of you, I must ask you to consider fixing the following things. |
| Explain your position on the budget.  BE CLEAR | This budget provides no new support for public transportation, and as a person with a disability, that is unacceptable to me. I rely on public transportation to get to the supermarket, to get to work, and to stay independent in the community. Without any new money for public transportation in this budget, our public transportation options will be reduced because of increased operating costs.  OR  It’s nice there is more money for Medicaid waivers, but the stark reality for those of us that have a waiver is the wage for our direct support professionals is not enough for us to find qualified and dependable people to work with us. |
| Explain how these changes affect you.  BE YOURSELF | Like you, I just spent the last year in isolation because of the pandemic. And as we begin to open everything back up, I run the risk of staying in isolation because I can’t get where I want to go.  OR  In the last year, I have lost three different support staff, who have all left for higher paying jobs. When the state places such a small value on the services I need, it becomes harder and harder to find people who want to provide me the services I need to stay in the community. I don’t want to leave my community. I’ve worked hard to gain some independence, but all of that gets put in jeopardy when I can’t find support. |
| CLOSING:  Thank the legislators for listening. Remember, this isn’t their budget, this is a budget put together for them to consider. | Thank you Mr. Chairman and members of the committee for letting me share my story. I am happy to answer any questions you have about my testimony. |

Testifying before a legislative committee can seem scary. It’s important to know that advocates who testify are there to tell their story and how anything in a bill would affect them. Nobody knows your story, your day-to-day life, your issues better than you. Talk about what you know and you will see how easy it is to testify. Just remember that time is short and you need to stay on point.

To help you build your own version of testimony, here is a form you can fill out and it will generate budget testimony for you.

Name

Street Address

City

Are you with an organization or advocacy group or just representing yourself? If so, what is the name of the organization or advocacy group?

Are you a senior citizen, a person with a disability, a family member, a provider of services? How would you describe yourself to legislators that would listen to your testimony?

Which agency’s budget are you going to talk about (e.g. Department of Medicaid)?

What is it about their budget proposal that you like or do not like (BE CLEAR)? (note, you can insert additional paragraphs in the field by clicking SHIFT+ENTER keys)

Explain how the budget proposal will affect you:

Do you think the budget proposal should be changed? If so, how would you change it?

Is there anything else the legislators should know about your story that will help them make a decision on your budget item?

House Finance Subcommittee on Health and Human Services

Testimony of

Click or tap to enter a date.

Chairman Roemer, Ranking Member West, and members of the committee, my name is and I live in , Ohio. I am here to testify on ‘s budget proposal. I am here as and am testifying on behalf of .

Because time is short, I will briefly explain my position on ‘s budget proposal.

This budget proposal directly impacts me in my life.

I want to thank you for taking the time to consider my viewpoint.