



**Do you feel strongly about a bill up for a public hearing this legislative session?**

**YOUR VOICE MATTERS!**

**Public feedback is critical** to the legislative process: that's why a hearing is required for all bills under consideration by the Connecticut legislature.

**Writing testimony** may sound time-consuming, but it doesn't have to be! We hope this guide will make the process as quick and easy as possible **so your voice can be heard in Hartford.**

This "how-to" will cover the following topics. Feel free to read through, or click a link below to jump directly to that section of the guide.

#### [Basic Written Testimony](#)

[Template 1: Testimony IN FAVOR OF a bill](#)

[Template 2: Testimony AGAINST a bill](#)

#### [In-Person Testimony](#)

[Template: In-Person Testimony](#)

[Guidelines & Tips for In-Person Testimony](#)

[TIME LIMIT](#)

[PREPARE & PRACTICE](#)

#### [Sample Testimony](#)

[Example #1](#)

[Example #2](#)

#### [Tracking Juvenile Justice Issues & Bills](#)

[CTJJA Alerts](#)

[Online Bill Tracker](#)

#### [Additional Resources](#)



## Basic Written Testimony

The templates below are short and to the point. You are welcome to add your own personal touches, but as long as the basics are covered you can write testimony in just a few minutes:

### Template 1: Testimony IN FAVOR OF a bill

Hello, my name is (full name). I am from (town of residence).

I am in favor of (bill number and name) because (state why you support the bill)<sup>1</sup>.

Thank you to (name of the committee) for reading my testimony. Please contact me at (your email address) if you have any questions.

### Template 2: Testimony AGAINST a bill

Hello, my name is (full name). I am from (town of residence).

I am against (bill number and name) because (state why you are against the bill)<sup>2</sup>.

Thank you to (name of the committee) for reading my testimony. Please contact me at (your email address) if you have any questions.

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<sup>1</sup> How did you come to be involved with or interested in this issue? What do legislators need to know about you and your family's experience **specific to the bill**? Written testimony can be as long as you like, but it's best to put the most important information at the beginning so it will stand out.

<sup>2</sup> See above



## In-Person Testimony

Public hearings give you the chance to speak face-to-face with legislators regarding the bill under consideration. Oral testimony is similar to written testimony, although there are a few more guidelines regarding length and format you should follow.

In addition to a template for, this section includes some tips for preparing your in-person testimony, plus information on how to sign up to speak, and what you should expect once you get to Hartford.

We also encourage you to check out the Legislature's guide to participating in public hearings. It is a quick and easy read that includes more tips, as well as a bunch of helpful links and contact details for people in Hartford who can provide further assistance: <https://www.cga.ct.gov/asp/content/YourVoiceMatters.pdf>

### Template: In-Person Testimony

Hello, my name is (full name). I am from (town of residence).

Thank you to the Committee leaders, (name of committee chairs and vice chairs you are testifying in front of)<sup>3</sup> and to all the legislators on the (name of committee) for hearing my testimony today.

I am (for / against) (bill number and name) because (state why you are against the bill)<sup>4</sup>.

Thank you again to the committee for allowing me to testify. I am happy to answer any questions you may have for me at this time.

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<sup>3</sup> TAKE NOTE: If you are addressing both Senators and Representatives, you should name the Senators first.

<sup>4</sup> See footnotes on previous page



## Guidelines & Tips for In-Person Testimony

### TIME LIMIT

- Spoken testimony is limited to **3 minutes**. A bell will ring marking the end of your 3 minutes, at which point you must conclude.
- If you have a lot to say about the topic and know you won't be able to fit it all into 3 minutes, remember: **there is no limit on the length of written testimony**.
  - Your **spoken testimony should focus on the key issues** you really want the committee to know.
  - Additional details or less urgent information will be read by the committee when they review your written submission.

### PREPARE & PRACTICE

- When preparing your in-person testimony, type it **double-spaced**: a 3-minute presentation is roughly equal to **2 pages double-spaced**.
- **Practice at home with a timer** set to 3 minutes so you are comfortable reading at a steady pace while staying within the time limit.
- Testimony needs to be emailed ahead of time to the committee holding the hearing for the bill.
  - Children's Committee: [kidtestimony@cga.ct.gov](mailto:kidtestimony@cga.ct.gov)
  - Judiciary Committee: [JUDtestimony@cga.ct.gov](mailto:JUDtestimony@cga.ct.gov)



## Sample Testimony

Remember: the most important information you are trying to convey is:

- Who are you?
  - How did you come to be involved with or interested in this issue?
- Why are you testifying?
  - What do legislators need to know about you and your family's experience **specific to the bill**?
  - How do you believe this bill will positively or negatively impact you, the people you work with, etc.?

The following examples show how this simple input can make a powerful statement:

### Example #1

*"Any bill that puts more kids in detention is a bad idea. We need to invest in young people and communities, not in detention. I saw my community tear down Boys and Girls Clubs while always keeping the jail open. What are the priorities when we keep prisons open and close things to help kids and families? I know the state cut many juvenile justice programs in recent years. We need to put more programs in place for kids, not put more kids in jail."*

### Example #2

*"I am in favor of the bill to remove all kids from Manson and York because that place makes kids worse not better. When kids are in places where they don't always get school or counseling and they are kept locked up in their cell all day they will just get more angry. They will come home without a diploma or a way to get a job. I also know a Connecticut report says that black kids are more likely to go to Manson than white kids – because of their race. That's not right."*



## Tracking Juvenile Justice Issues & Bills

### CTJJA Alerts

If you are [signed up to receive emails](#) from CTJJA, we will send out instructions specific to public hearings for juvenile justice bills. Those instructions will include:

- o Name and number of bill
- o Committee holding the hearing, names of Chair and Vice-Chair
- o Date of public hearing
- o Time to testify
- o Talking points / fact sheet about the bill to help with your testimony
- o What you need to bring with you to the public hearing (copies of your testimony, how many)
- o Where to send your testimony & when it is due

### Online Bill Tracker

You can also use the legislature's online tracking tool to subscribe and receive updates on any bill being considered this session.

Follow [this link](#), then select "Access the Bill Tracking Application for the General Public" to get to the sign-up page.



## Additional Resources

- Find your legislator: <https://www.cga.ct.gov/asp/menu/cgafindleg.asp>