



TESTIFYING “Cheat Sheet” for the 2021 Legislature”

The United States and Montana Constitutions ensure that citizens have the right to speak on issues that impact at every level of government. The Montana Legislature extends this right to all Montanans. Even during this time of COVID, the Legislature continues to function in an open atmosphere.

Most people have a fear of public speaking. The following tips may be helpful in preparing to ease any potential nervousness. Whether you are speaking at the podium or on ZOOM during the session, the process is the same. Montana has a citizen’s legislature allowing regular Montanans to shape laws and policy. Remember are the expert!

Nurses need to speak to nursing issues!

***TESTIFYING TIPS and BEST PRACTICES:**

You will be required to sign in when you are in the room or identify yourself on ZOOM. The Chairperson will tee up the order of the testimony. Usually the order is: informational testimony, proponents, and opponents. The Chairperson will also state any limitations such as “keep you remarks to two minutes” or “keep your comments specific to the legislation”. **Rule #1: BE BRIEF!** Legislators work to make sure everyone gets a chance to share their opinions so short and concise testimony is appreciated.

If you request to testify via Zoom, you must provide brief written comments if you experience technical difficulties and are unable to provide verbal testimony during the meeting. **You must have your written testimony**

uploaded by NOON the day BEFORE the bill hearing! There is specific guidance on <https://leg.mt.gov/> with instructions on how to upload your testimony and supporting documents.

1. Address the Chairperson in the following way:

“Chairperson/Madam Chair/ Chairman (Last name) and members of the committee:

For the record, my name is (First and Last Name). My last name is spelled (spell it out). I live in (Your hometown and legislative district if you know it.) I am her representing (self/organization). I stand in support/opposition of (Senate or House Bill Number and Title)”.

2. Share your relationship to the issue – why your position is relevant. Add 1-3 key points. Try not to be redundant. Mention if you agree with specific points made before you then add any new information that might be important for the committee to hear.
3. Reiterate your position on the bill. Let them know you are available for questions during Q&A. **(Important to stay for the entire committee meeting. If you must leave early at the end of your testimony address the Chair and ask permission to leave early.)**

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4. Thank the Chair and the committee for the opportunity to testify. Ask permission of the chair if you have testimony or documents to submit before handing them to the staff.

*MORE Tips:

- Speak from the heart. Do not skip your stories that bring relevance to the issue.
- Stick to approved talking points. An additional review ensures that there are no red flags in your testimony.
- Try not to read your testimony. Practice ahead of time and look at notes if possible when you need a prompt. Be brief.
- ***No need to be nervous!***

*Answering Questions from Committee members:

If you are called back to the podium or questioned during a ZOOM call, the following tips will be helpful:

- Address the chair and the committee member who is asking you the question. (“*Chair (Last name)*” and “*Representative/Senator (Last Name)*”).

Answer the question to the best of your ability. If you do not know the answer, say that you do not. Offer to get the information if possible. If someone in the audience can answer the question, ask if you can defer to the individual. If you have written testimony, ask the chair if you can leave for members. The chair will generally request that you provide testimony to staff.

REMEMBER: YOU are the expert!