

Tips for Testifying Before the Joint Finance Committee

- Arrive early if you plan to testify. The hearings draw a big crowd. Complete a registration form which is available from the legislative pages who are staff the hearing.
- Register to testify. In order to testify, you will need to fill out a registration slip (usually available on staffed table just outside the room or from the pages – see above). Fill out the form and return it to the staff. Depending upon when you register and how many people are in attendance, you may need to plan to stay the better part of the day.
- When you are called to testify, begin your testimony by greeting the co-chairs and committee members (“Good morning/afternoon insert names of JFC co-chairs [Rep. X and Sen. Y] and members of the committee”) and identify yourself and your organization (if applicable). Relax, you have an important message that legislators need to hear. Keep your comments brief (2-3 minutes) and to the point. If other presenters have spoken on the topic you are speaking to, try to highlight new information instead of repeating points already made. Avoid using professional jargon. Provide plain language personal stories and examples to support your testimony.
- Help legislators understand why your issue is so important – not just to you, your agency, consumers and/or family members, but also for the state (and state budget).
- Following your testimony, committee members may wish to ask you questions regarding your comments or topic. If you don’t know the answer, acknowledge the question and offer to provide follow-up information to the committee members.
- Prepare written testimony to leave with committee (bring at least 20 copies). Your written testimony can be longer and is an opportunity to share more detailed information than you had time to provide in your testimony. If you need to leave before you are called to testify, you may leave your written testimony with a page who will make sure the committee members receive it.

The committee may stop taking testimony at the end time specified for the hearing. There are other ways to provide input on the budget. Written comments can also be emailed to: budgetcomments@legis.wisconsin.gov (this email site is not up and running until after the first public hearing notice goes out) or sent by U.S. mail to: Joe Malkasian, Room 305 East, State Capitol, Madison, WI 53703.