

Tips for Testifying Before the Joint Finance Committee (JFC) at State Budget Hearings

- Arrive early if you plan to **testify in person**. The hearings draw a big crowd and management at each of the venues will be monitoring capacity.
- **Register to testify**. To testify, you will need to fill out a registration slip (usually available on a staffed table just outside the room or from a legislative page). 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 Senator Marklein and Representative Born and members of the Joint Finance Committee”) and identifying 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 to the state (and state budget).
- Generally, **committee members do not ask testifiers questions regarding their state budget comments**. If you are asked a follow up question, answer if you can and 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 brief oral 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. Additionally, **it is good practice to also email your own state Senator and Assembly Representative a copy of your testimony**.

The JFC 2023-2025 State Budget Public Hearings will run from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. The committee may stop taking testimony at the end time specified for the hearing. There are additional ways to provide input on the budget. The JFC has created an online portal for constituents to provide input: <https://legis.wisconsin.gov/topics/budgetcomments/>. All entries will be circulated to the full committee. The JFC has also developed a dedicated email address for input only: budgetcomments@legis.wisconsin.gov and all emails will be circulated to the full committee. The public hearing schedule is posted on the next page.

Joint Finance Committee 2023-2025 State Budget Public Hearing Schedule

The public hearing schedule is:

- **Wednesday, April 5, 2023 - Waukesha** County Expo Center, Main Arena, 1000 Northview Rd, Waukesha
- **Tuesday, April 11, 2023 - UW-Eau Claire**, Davies Student Center, Ojibwe Grand Ballroom (Third Floor), 77 Roosevelt Ave., Eau Claire
- **Wednesday, April 12, 2023 - Wilderness Resort**, Glacier Canyon Conference Center, Sandstone Meeting Room, 45 Hillman Road, **Wisconsin Dells**
- **Wednesday, April 26, 2023** - Lakeland Union High School, 9573 State Highway 70, **Minocqua**

The Joint Finance Committee has created a website where written input on the budget can be submitted: <https://legis.wisconsin.gov/topics/budgetcomments/>. The website is also intended to be a helpful tool when looking for upcoming budget hearing and other documents pertaining to the budget process.

For details on the budget and legislative priorities of the Wisconsin Aging Advocacy Network (WAAN) see the WAAN 2023 State Issue Briefs: <https://gwaar.org/waan-issues-and-initiatives>.