



Preparing & Delivering Congressional Testimony

Overview

Congressional hearings are the principal method by which committees gather information in the early stages of policy development and decision-making. There are many types of hearings, and many committees adopt their own procedural rules, but they all share some common elements of preparation and format.

If you are invited to testify, contact us at Federal_Strategy@jh.edu. The university's lobbyists can provide tailored advice and guidance so you can make the most of this opportunity to deliver a message directly to key decision-makers and help build the public record for a measure or issue.

Written Testimony Tips

Key elements of an effective, informative, and compelling witness statement include:

- Thank the committee, chair, and ranking member at the beginning
- Establish standing and credibility as a witness
- Explain issues, facts, and remedies sought
- Connect to members' interests/previous action

- Use data and research to make your point, but offer anecdotes, vignettes, and comparisons for context
- Articulate the benefit to the federal government and taxpayers, if possible
- Restate recommendations, requested remedies, calls to action in the closing
- Include disclaimer, *"The views expressed are my own and do not necessarily reflect the views or positions of the Johns Hopkins University or the Johns Hopkins Health System."*

Pre-hearing Preparation

The Office of Federal Strategy can help you connect with committee staff to understand goals and expected questions. For instance,

- Hearing type: Is this an oversight, investigative, appropriations, didactic, or field hearing?
- Power players: What is the role of the chair vs. ranking member, committee vs. personal staff?
- Committee jurisdiction: What type of action is within the committee's power?
- Committee members: Which members are supporters or opponents of the policies being examined; how might members' home state and background influence their perspective on the topic?
- Format: What is the regular order for proceedings, e.g., time limits and order of questioning?
- Contrary perspectives: What are the opposition's key messages?

Hearing Day Tips

- Keep to the time limit—generally five minutes for oral statement—and answer questions succinctly
- Bring 10 copies of your prepared statement for press and observers
- Do not repeat points made by speakers ahead of you
- Answer as clearly and briefly as you can. If you don't know an answer, offer to follow up promptly in writing
- Do not argue with people giving opposing testimony or the members of the committee

Virtual Hearing Tips

- Secure private space to avoid interruptions
- Ensure appropriate and professional background (do not display political activity or affiliations)
- Test internet connection, platform (Zoom, WebEx, etc.), computer camera, microphone, sound, and headset in advance
- Ensure you have cellphone numbers for committee staff in case you need to troubleshoot technology challenges during the hearing

- Enable personal hot spot on phone as backup in the event WiFi is disconnected
- On hearing day, log in 10-15 minutes early to test all technology necessary for a successful hearing
- Remember to mute upon entry and when not speaking

Post-hearing Activities

- Respond in writing to questions for the record
- Review and edit hearing transcript for accuracy

For more information, contact the Office of Federal Strategy at Federal_Strategy@jh.edu. Johns Hopkins affiliates should contact Government, Community and Economic Partnerships at gce@jh.edu if they have questions about testimony and process in state legislatures as those environments differ.

Witness	Hearing Title	Committee	Date
Dr. Frederick Barrett, JHM	Emerging Therapies: Breakthroughs in the Battle Against Suicide?	House Committee on Veterans Affairs, Subcommittee on Health Oversight	11/14/23
Dr. Tom Inglesby, BSPH	Avoiding a Cautionary Tale: Policy Considerations for Artificial Intelligence in Health Care	Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions	11/8/23
Dr. Luis E. Quintero, CBS	Examining Competition and Consumer Rights in Housing Markets	Subcommittee on Primary Health & Retirement Security	10/19/23
Dr. Sarah Szanton, SON	Examining Health Care Workforce Shortages: Where Do We Go From Here?	Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions	2/16/23

Suggested Template

Testimony for the Record

Submitted to the

[Committee Name]

[Subcommittee, if appropriate]

for the Hearing

“[Hearing Title]”

[Date of Hearing]

[Witness Name]

[Witness Title]

Chairman [Last Name], Ranking Member [Last Name] and Members of the Committee—thank you for inviting me to participate in today’s hearing and thank you for your attention to a topic that [Option 1] has been the focus of my professional career [or Option 2] is of critical national importance.

{YOUR BACKGROUND/BONA FIDES}

My name is [Witness Name]. I am a XXXX and have spent XXXX years at Johns Hopkins, where I XXXX. I would like to state for the record that the opinions expressed herein are my own and do not necessarily reflect the views or positions of the Johns Hopkins University or the Johns Hopkins Health System.

{THE PROBLEM}

In my research/experience/practice, I have seen [data, personal reflection or observation about the problem] and I am pleased/concerned that this Congress is taking a step to address XXXX [describe the bill or proposal before the committee]. Also, [provide context and an analysis of the landscape/problem under consideration]

{THE SOLUTION}

I urge the committee to XXXX [call to action or policy recommendation]. Thank you for the opportunity to testify, and I would be pleased to answer any questions you may have.