

## **Joint Finance Committee Public Hearing Tip Sheet**

This tip sheet is based on one man's experience attending and testifying at Joint Finance Committee Hearings.

Get there early to have someone get in line to sign in and get a number. I would recommend arriving between 1 to 1.5 hours early. The higher the number- the longer the wait in the day to testify. This will also give you additional time if you have to park some distance from the building and locate the wheelchair accessible entrance. Remember more people will be converging at this location than is typical.

When you sign in you will give a legislative staffer your name and let them know if you are testifying as an individual or for a group. In the past, an individual was given 2 minutes and a group spokesperson 3 minutes.

The Joint Finance Committee members will likely be sitting behind a long table on a stage. Two microphones will be set up at the end of each aisle to the left and right. Think auditorium layout. After opening remarks and information about the process of giving public testimony they will begin by calling out the first few numbers to line up behind the microphone. Odd numbers to one side, even numbers the other.

They will tell you when to start and they will time you. Someone will hold up different colored cards letting you know when your time is up. Yellow may mean 30 seconds remaining. Red means times up.

The hearing goes non-stop until the scheduled end time. This means as the day goes on, members of the committee may get up and leave the stage and staff may come up and speak in their ear. Don't take it personally, as it is a long day for them and they need breaks.

As you approach the microphone to speak identify yourself (first name is fine) and why you are there. Have prepared and rehearsed your testimony using a timer. Rehearse multiple times. Make sure you fit your most important points within the time you have. It is okay to be nervous. You are not a lobbyist, you are a family member who is concerned about what the budget will do to your loved one's life. This is your "real voice", your "real power". If you can put your testimony into a personal story that can be very effective. But be aware some stories we have can be very emotional for us. All I can say is share what is comfortable for you.

If you do not wish to speak you can provide written testimony to be included in the official record. If possible, please bring 16 copies of the testimony (one for each member of the committee)

It can be a long day. Bring snacks and water. You can sit in the seats and watch other people testify. You can get up and go to the lobby. Just be aware of your number and where the committee is at in the overall line of people testifying. You do not want to miss when your number is called.

No posters or signs are allowed. If you are speaking for a group they can come down and stand behind you for support.

Be respectful with your words and your tone. Name calling, shouting and accusations are not effective.

I've done this a couple of times. It is likely a Wisconsin Eye TV camera will be there recording the testimony. Try to ignore it. I still get nervous. I wonder - Can I do it? I take a moment and remember who I'm doing this for and why. I take two deep breaths, which seems to help the butterflies, line up and go forward.

One last thing:

Write down your specific ask. Do it in large, easy to read letters. You want to close with what you want them to do.

For example: **“I ask that you remove all the Long Term Care changes from this budget, so that all stakeholders can come together and work out the best solution for everyone involved. Thank you.”**

The reason I suggest doing this is so you are prepared if you run out of time, or get flustered - you will get your request in.