

Building Your Story (#3)

Instructor Notes

This lesson is meant to provide participants a guide on how to develop their testimony. The two-page handout is your primary tool. The front is trifold summary sheet. It's meant to be this lesson in a single page. The back side has five steps for folks to follow. They are:

- 1) Introductions. "My name is Ed Roberts. I represent the Center for Independent Living, in Berkeley."
- 2) Why you are here. This is usually as simple as what bill you are speaking about, and your view of it. "I am here in support of AB 123." When you are doing general advocacy, such as in a meeting with a legislator, you would say why you are there. "I am here to request you oppose funding cuts to our service system."
- 3) Your expertise. This is a short statement on your personal experience with the issue being discussed. For a bill, it doesn't have to be absolutely identical to the bill itself. For instance, if you were talking about a bill about making paratransit approvals accepted anywhere in the state, you could say "I use public transportation to get to my job." If you are advocating for the system as a whole, talk briefly about your services and how they affect your life.
- 4) How this affects you and others. This is where you answer the question "why does this matter?" Take a big-picture approach! And yes, it may sound like a bumper sticker. "Transportation lets people get to where they need to be." "My services help me live the life I want."
- 5) Closing. Thank your audience for listening, and re-state what you said in #2, but as a request. "Thank you for your time. Please support AB 123" or "please support our system."

PRO TIPS

Pay attention to the clock! In the Legislature, there are almost *always* time limits on how long you can speak. Usually, people get no more than two or three minutes. If you don't know in advance, have a 5-second version as a back-up. That's going to be your name, who you represent, and "I support/oppose this."

Be sure to remind people that this is their story. If they need help putting it together, that's ok, but it should be their words – nobody else's!

The following is another view on what legislative testimony might look and sound like.

- **Greet everyone.**
 - "Good afternoon Senator _____ and members of the committee. Thank you for allowing me to speak with you today."
 - Good afternoon Senator Beall and members of the committee. Thank you for allowing me to speak with you today.
- **Introduce yourself.**

Building Your Story (#3)

- My name is _____ and I live in _____. I am a person with a disability/a family member with a disability.
 - My name is Sarah Jones and I live in Visalia, CA. I am a person with a disability.
- **Explain why you are speaking to them.**
 - I am here today to speak with you about AB/SB ____ which deals with _____. I want you to know that I support/do not support this bill.
 - I am here to speak with you about SB 412, which would get rid of two disability taxes. I want you to know that I support this bill.
- **Share your thoughts on the bill.**
 - This bill is important to me because _____.
 - This bill is important to me because people with developmental disabilities need services to help them live in the community. But to get some of those services, their families have to pay fees first. We need to make sure that people can get the services they need without having to worry about paying a tax first.
 - Address any misconceptions you know of. This is a great way to address the opposing side's argument.
 - These taxes were meant to help California balance the budget during the Recession. But the economy is doing well now, and the state shouldn't still be forcing people to pay money for services.
 - This would **help** me/my family by _____ **OR** This bill would **hurt** me/my family by _____. Be sure to make it personal.
 - We need this because people like me get a lot of help from the services we receive. They let me live in the community, work, and have friends and places to go. I was lucky that these taxes didn't apply to me. But if they did, I couldn't have afforded to pay them, and it would have been very hard for my family, too. I might not have been able to get these services because of those taxes.
- **Wrap everything up.**
 - Please keep me, and all Californians with developmental disabilities in mind when you vote on this bill.
- **Thank them.**

Building Your Story (#3)

- Thank you for listening to me. I would be happy to answer any questions you might have.
- **Return to your seat.**
 - If the committee doesn't have any questions for you, they will likely thank you in return and you can return to your seat in the audience so that the next person can speak.