

Classroom Exercise (#4)

Instructor Notes

The goal of this exercise is for students to feel comfortable developing and sharing a story. Based on the earlier lesson plans, and using the following prompt, have participants come up with testimony.

Assemblymember Petris is the author of AB 123. This bill would require local public transit agencies come up with a way to let someone who uses paratransit in one part of the state be automatically approved to use it somewhere else.

Testimonies should be no more than two minutes long. You may wish to have folks break into small groups and read their testimony to each other, with one group member timing them. As the teacher, you will need to keep an eye on the clock to make sure the practice fits into the timeline of the lesson plan. Once the small groups are done, you will hold a practice round. If the group is experienced with advocacy, you can reassemble the classroom as a mock legislative hearing (several chairs up front, one facing them for the person giving testimony, and the rest of the room facing them all as the audience). If the group is new to advocacy, folks should return to their normal seats so they aren't put "on the spot." You should make sure that whichever approach you use, it encourages participation!

Formally start off the event by welcoming the student speaker to the mock hearing. Remind them of the bill, and then introduce the student as someone who wants to testify. When an individual testimony is done, if they are new at this (especially if they aren't used to public speaking), definitely give them a round of applause! Then discuss their testimony with the group. Use the handout on "Building Your Story." Ask students to think about what was said. Did they cover all five parts? Could they have done anything differently? Keep it positive! As time permits, have another volunteer go up.

FINAL NOTES

Have the whole group give themselves a round of applause. They've earned it! Close by thanking them for wanting to be advocates. Make sure to remind them of the following basic points.

- Get to the hearing on time
- Dress professionally
- Plan and practice what you are going to say
- If you are speaking on behalf of a group, make sure they know what you will say
- Be positive, and stay on-topic
- Know your time limits
- Thank the people you speak to for listening to you

If individuals want to be more involved in advocacy, have them contact your organization's advocacy or outreach team (if appropriate).