



## How to Give Public Testimony

One way you can be an effective advocate for early childhood care and education is to give testimony or input on legislation, regulations and policies that affect early childhood care and education. Testimony or comments may be given in person at state and local public hearings and legislative committee meetings.

If you are not comfortable with public speaking, or even if you are, writing letters to legislators and government officials is also an important way to advocate. Because time is limited, relatively few people have the chance to give public testimony or comments on any particular issue, but everyone has the chance to write letters.

### Find out when public hearings and legislative committee meetings are held.

Sign up with early childhood and education advocacy and professional organizations to receive email alerts about issues important to you. Visit the California Legislature web site for information on current and upcoming events: <http://www.leginfo.ca.gov/> . Visit the Contra Costa County Board of Supervisors web site for a schedule of their meetings: <http://www.co.contra-costa.ca.us/index.aspx?nid=193> .

### Find out how you can testify or provide comment.

Opportunities to give testimony before legislative committees and public agencies are usually arranged ahead of time. Professional and advocacy organizations often line up knowledgeable individuals to provide testimony, so let these organizations know that you are available and interested in providing testimony when issues related to your areas of expertise come before legislative committees and government agencies. Public hearings usually allow time for members of the public to provide comments. If you are interested in giving input at a public hearing, find out ahead of time how the meeting will be run and what procedures will be used for giving testimony or providing comment. Be sure to arrive early and to sign in on the list of persons wanting time to speak.

### Put your testimony or comments in writing.

You will have only a limited time to speak, usually 3-5 minutes. It is therefore very important to organize your thoughts ahead of time and to write down the points you want to make so that you can be sure to cover them in the time you are given. Having your testimony or comments in writing will allow you to give copies to committee members to help them remember what you said. Be sure to include your contact information along with the text of your testimony or comments so that committee members can contact you for more information if needed.

### Be concise and stay on topic.

Begin by stating your name and where you are from. Talk about your personal and/or professional experiences as appropriate and explain how your experiences relate to the specific legislation, regulation or policy under consideration. You can also speak about related issues, but be sure to keep your message focused and clear. In summary, “Be brief. Be sincere. Be seated.” (Franklin Delano Roosevelt).

### Resources:

“How to Give Public Testimony to the State Vocational Rehabilitation Committee”.

<http://labor.alaska.gov/svrc/public-testimony/tips-public-testimony.pdf>

“State House Basics: Giving Testimony on Infant-Toddler Issues”. ZERO TO THREE Policy Center.

<http://www.zerotothree.org/public-policy/newsletters/tips-for-giving-testimony-on.html>