



Testimony Template

How This Testimony Can Be Used for Advocacy

This sample testimony can be adapted for legislative committee hearings on bills that impose fines, penalties, arrests, incarceration, or other criminal sanctions on people experiencing homelessness. Customize the testimony to reflect your organization's experience, local data, and the specific bill under consideration.

! Important: Legislative committees often limit oral testimony to **three minutes or less**. In some cases, testimony may be limited to **one minute** if there are many speakers. Prepare both a full version and a shortened version in advance, focusing on your strongest points and your specific request to lawmakers.

Sample Testimony Opposing a Bill

Thank you, [Chair person name] and members of the committee, for the opportunity to testify today. My name is [your name], and I am the [your role/title] of [organization/affiliation] in [city/location].

For many years, [organization name] has worked to expand access to affordable and supportive housing for people experiencing homelessness. Since 2008, in partnership with our state's Housing Finance Agency, we have assisted in the development of more than 2,000 housing units serving chronically homeless individuals, families, and veterans, achieving a 90% housing stability rate.

We understand the pressure lawmakers face from constituents who are concerned about people sleeping outside, and we agree that more must be done to address homelessness. However, it is important to recognize what is already working. Our experience has shown that helping people access stable housing and supportive services is far more effective than arresting, detaining, or incarcerating them.

What is needed in communities across our state is greater investment in housing, supportive services, behavioral health care, and other evidence-based interventions that help people stabilize their lives. These approaches address the root causes of homelessness and help individuals obtain and maintain permanent housing.

[Insert a brief description of the local solution, program, funding proposal, or policy change you are advocating for as an alternative. Need ideas? You can also review CSH's template



legislation and policy resources for examples of proven solutions that communities can advance.]

In contrast, [bill name/number] H.B. 1662 would not reduce homelessness. Instead, it would impose additional burdens on people experiencing homelessness through fines, arrests, and criminal records that can make it even harder to secure employment and housing.

The bill would also increase costs for taxpayers. Implementation of [bill name/number] H.B. 1662 would require significant reliance on expensive crisis response systems, including law enforcement, emergency medical services, detoxification centers, the court system, hospitals, psychiatric facilities, and jails. When individuals leave these systems, they are often discharged back into homelessness, perpetuating a costly homeless-arrest-incarceration cycle without resolving the underlying issue.

As a result, [bill name/number] H.B. 1662 would increase the number of people caught in this cycle while generating significant costs for the state, local governments, and taxpayers.

By contrast, investments in housing and supportive services have been shown to reduce reliance on emergency and criminal justice systems. When communities provide stable housing paired with supportive services rather than relying on policing and emergency interventions, cities and counties typically spend **\$6,875 less per person**. These cost savings can be reinvested in housing, services, and other community priorities that produce better long-term outcomes.

Finally, local communities are best positioned to determine the strategies that work for their residents. Local leaders understand their unique challenges and should retain the flexibility to implement solutions that are effective, fiscally responsible, and responsive to community needs.

In conclusion, [bill name/number] H.B. 1662 threatens to undermine the progress communities have made in addressing homelessness by diverting resources away from proven, evidence-based approaches and toward costly interventions that have not been shown to reduce homelessness. This bill would increase burdens on both taxpayers and people experiencing homelessness while making it harder for communities to implement solutions that work.

We respectfully urge you to vote no on [bill name/number] H.B. 1662 and instead support housing, services, and community-based solutions that help people achieve long-term stability.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I am happy to answer any questions.

▶ The sample above is intended to demonstrate structure and messaging. Adapt it to reflect your local conditions, organizational expertise, and the specific legislation under consideration.



When to Use This Template

Committee testimony provides an opportunity to place your position and expertise directly into the legislative record. Testimony can help legislators better understand how proposed legislation may affect people experiencing homelessness, service providers, local governments, and community resources.

Use this testimony when:

- Providing comments during a committee hearing.
- Representing your organization before lawmakers.
- Sharing local data, program outcomes, and community impacts.
- Supplementing written testimony submitted to the committee.
- Offering recommendations, concerns, or proposed amendments.

Best practices:

- Confirm testimony rules and deadlines before the hearing.
- Submit written testimony in advance if required.
- Keep oral remarks focused on 2-3 key messages.
- Use local examples and data whenever possible.
- Clearly state your position near the beginning of your remarks.
- End with a specific request, such as voting yes, voting no, or adopting amendments.
- Practice your testimony aloud and time yourself.
- Prepare both a three-minute and one-minute version.

Hearing day tips:

- Arrive early and sign in if required.
- Bring printed copies of your testimony.
- Expect questions from committee members.
- Be respectful and concise.
- Do not assume every committee member has read the bill or background materials.
- Stay focused on facts, local experience, and solutions.
- If you do not know the answer to a question, offer to follow up after the hearing.

Messaging Considerations

The sample language in this resource is designed to be **non-partisan, solutions-focused, and broadly applicable across various political environments**, including states and communities where lawmakers may respond more strongly to messages about fiscal responsibility, local control, public safety, government efficiency, and evidence-based outcomes.



The examples intentionally **avoid partisan framing** and instead focus on:

- Cost-effective use of taxpayer resources
- Local decision-making and flexibility
- Evidence-based solutions
- Improved community outcomes
- Reducing homelessness through housing and services
- Public system efficiency and accountability

▶ Advocates should review and adapt these messages to reflect local conditions, legislative priorities, and the preferences of policymakers in their state or community. Messaging that resonates in one state or district may require modification in another.

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