



# Texans Care For Children

814 San Jacinto, Suite 307, Austin, 78701  
512.473.2274 | [www.texanscareforchildren.org](http://www.texanscareforchildren.org)



## Legislative Committee Hearings

Providing testimony before a Legislative committee allows you educate key legislators about your issue area. Committees meet during the legislative session to discuss bills, and also during the time between sessions (called the interim) to study specific issues assigned by the House and Senate leadership.

If you are planning to attend a committee hearing, contact Texans Care For Children and let us know! We can help with materials, answer questions, or even just be there to provide support.

To understand what a committee hearing is like, you can view or listen to past committee hearings online.

Texas House of Representatives Audio and Video:

<http://www.house.state.tx.us/media/welcome.php>

Texas Senate Audio and Video:

<http://www.senate.state.tx.us/75r/senate/AVarch.htm>

### ***Preparing to Testify***

- If possible, attend other committee hearings ahead of time to get familiar with how hearing process works.
- You can provide oral testimony, written testimony, or both. If you do speak before the committee, it is usually a good idea to also have prepared written testimony.
- Bring one copy of your written testimony for each member – the committee clerk cannot make copies for you, and you cannot submit testimony unless you have sufficient copies for all members! The written testimony should have your name and contact information.

### ***At the Committee Hearing***

Testifying before a committee can be nerve-racking. Often, committee members will be called away during the hearing, or they may have conversations with each other while you are testifying.

- Don't read directly from your written testimony!
  - Mention if you are a constituent of one of the committee members.
  - Maintain eye contact with the committee members who are present and speak slowly and calmly.
  - Address one issue at a time.
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- Keep your message simple - avoid jargon!
- Use a real life story if possible.
- Try to confine remarks to irrefutable facts - inflating, exaggerating, or fabricating will damage your credibility.
- Cite support from others.
- Tell the committee specifically what you want.
- Use visual aids if they are relevant.
- Even if no one seems to be listening, keep going!
- Be prepared to answer questions from the committee. Don't be afraid to say "I don't know, but I'll get back to you." Be sure to follow up with any requests for additional information as soon as possible.

### ***The Reality of Hearings***

Committee hearings sound pretty simple, don't they? Unfortunately, they don't always go according to plan.

During a legislative session, committee meetings can be rescheduled or canceled at the last minute. If you come to Austin intending to testify or simply attend a committee meeting, make sure you have a backup plan in case the meeting is canceled or rescheduled.

To check on the status of a scheduled meeting, call that Committee's office or clerk.

For House Committee office contact information, visit:

<http://www.house.state.tx.us/committees/welcome.htm>

For Senate Committee office phone numbers, visit:

<http://www.senate.state.tx.us/75r/senate/Commit.htm>