

## Tips for Testifying During Virtual Session

- 1. Prepare Your Testimony in Advance.** Even if you think you know what you're going to say, you should always write out your testimony in advance so you are sure you have included everything you want to cover and know you can say everything in the allotted time. The *Hook, Line & Sinker* framework provides a good model for shaping your testimony. Also, if you are testifying as a panel with other partners, make sure you coordinate messaging and are not duplicative.
- 2. Practice Out Loud.** You can read something a dozen times, but it will always be different to say it out loud. You read at a different pace than you speak, and you may stumble over words when you say them that you don't when you read them. Before you testify, read your testimony out loud to a friend, a pet, or yourself in the mirror.
- 3. Virtual Session Tip: Test Your Technology.** We are all getting used to the opportunities and challenges that working and advocating remotely can present. Make sure to test your technology in advance, such as making sure your microphone works, testing your WIFI connection, making sure you have the app/platform required, ensuring that app/platform is updated, and knowing how to unmute yourself.
- 4. Virtual Session Tip: Have a 'Plan B'.** Technology glitches happen and it's important to be prepared to pivot. This could include having a hotspot ready to go on your phone in case your WiFi fails, being prepared to turn off video and do voice only if you have connectivity issues, or having a written statement prepared that summarizes your testimony in case you need to email it in. Sometimes there is also a call-in option that could be a good back-up, so make sure to have that number in front of you in case you need to call-in instead of video at the last minute.
- 5. Watch Your Time.** It is a general assumption that you will have 3 minutes for your testimony. However, sometimes there are a lot of bills up and you may only get 1-2 minutes. Make sure you have thought through ahead of time what you will keep in or cut out depending on how much time you are given. And do NOT run over time. If you run out of time, stop. You can provide your full testimony in writing to staff and they will distribute it to the committee.
- 6. Make A Connection.** It is okay to look at your notes and read your testimony, but try to look up and make eye contact when you can. Legislators often are looking at their computers and during virtual session you might not be able to see them at all. It may not feel like they are listening, but they are, especially when you are sharing a personal story.
- 7. Remain Calm and Professional.** Testifying can be an intimidating experience, but just remain calm. You've practiced your testimony (right?!) and you know this issue, probably better than most of the people on the committee because you have lived it. Also make sure you remain professional – be comfortable without being casual. And try not to get frazzled if there are technology glitches (see tip #11 below).
- 8. Be Genuine.** You bring something very special and important to a committee hearing – real life experience with an issue they are considering. Sometimes this means you might get emotional or you might stumble. That's okay. Just gather your thoughts and remember, your story is an important one for them to hear.

9. **Don't Make Up Information.** Sometimes committee members will ask follow-up questions. If you know the answer, great! If you don't, do not make it up. Respond that you don't know but are happy to look into it and get back to them.
10. **Be Prepared to Adjust.** Listen to other people who are testifying and make sure you are not duplicating messaging. If someone else covers your main points, say you agree with their points and then focus on your story and your experience. You also might be told as you're walking up that time is running short and you are getting only 1 minute instead of 3 minutes. Always be prepared with a plan for adjusting and focusing on your key points.
11. **Breathe.**
12. **Follow Up if Needed.** Follow up with the committee if there were any questions asked that needed follow up or additional information. You can also provide your testimony in writing to committee staff if you ran out of time or couldn't get to everything in the allotted time.