

Testimony/Witness Preparation for U.S. Congressional Hearings

You've been asked to provide expert testimony before a House or Senate Committee. So, now what?

- Call the U-M Washington D.C. Government Relations Office and let the D.C. Office know!
 - Madeline Nykaza, Assistant Director – mnykaza@umich.edu
 - Kristina Ko, Assistant VP for Research, Federal Relations – kdko@umich.edu
- The U-M Washington D.C. Office can help you:
 - Deliver any required hard-copies of your testimony to the Committee prior to the Hearing;
 - Review the objective of the Hearing, why you were asked to testify, and what is appropriate (and what is not) to include in your testimony;
 - Provide feedback and edits for your written and oral testimony; and,
 - Practice your oral testimony for delivery and understanding.
 - In addition, we can answer any questions or concerns you may have and promote your testimony through our media relations.

Key items to note for your written testimony:

- Start your written (and oral) testimony with: Good morning/afternoon Chair(wo)man X, Ranking Member Y, and distinguished members of the (sub)committee. Thank you for inviting me to speak with you today about XX.
- End with: In closing, [what statement/message do you want to leave them with?]. If none, then

Key items to note for your oral testimony:

- Be respectful (e.g., don't interrupt a Member and put personal politics aside)
- Be confident and relaxed
- Make sure your message is clear – ask individuals outside of your field if they understand what you're trying to convey.
- Answer the question you are asked and ensure your response is targeted to the question; do not answer more than what you are being asked.
- Keep your answers succinct (the fewer the words the better) and fact based.
- Do not use acronyms or be sure to define them in the beginning.
- Your views are your own and are not necessarily the views of the university.

If you don't understand, know how to answer, don't have the answer at that moment but could obtain it, or a question is beyond your expertise, say:

- That question is beyond my expertise. I'm sorry, I do not have the answer to that question.

- No one expects you to be an expert outside of your field.
- Would you please repeat the question?
- I'm sorry, I don't know the answer to that question but would be happy to follow-up with you or your staff after the Hearing.
 - If there is a part of the question you do know then you could say, I don't know how to answer this part of your question but what I do know is...