

Testifying Tips **Ann Spicer, EVP**

Don't be intimidated. Legislators will value what you have to say and appreciate your participation in the process. You will get points just for showing up.

Tell your story. Anyone can recite facts and figures; only you can tell your story. Legislators are more apt to respond to a human interest story than statistics. Making it personal is more meaningful and memorable.

You don't have to have all the answers. It's okay not to know the answer to every question that might be raised. Don't let that concern keep you from testifying. If you don't know the answer to a question asked, don't be afraid to say, "I'm not sure but I will find out and get back with you." And then, of course, make sure you follow-up promptly with the information promised.

Keep it simple. Stick to no more than two or three key points. More than three points can confuse your message. Specifically state what you want - passage of SB 00; defeat of HB 00. Don't use unfamiliar medical terms and jargon; remember that you are addressing people with varying degrees of medical background (some of whom aren't going to have any medical background at all).

Call ahead. Notify the committee staff (normally the staff of the committee's chair) of your plans to testify. Legislative schedules tend to be rather erratic. If schedules change at the last minute, you can be notified. And if last minute schedule changes occur, be flexible.

Check in. When you arrive to testify, be sure to check in with committee staff; complete a witness slip; and, if possible, introduce yourself to the committee chair before the hearing starts. If you happen to be a constituent of one of the members of the committee, make sure they know it - they are sure to be particularly captivated by what you have to say.

Plan and practice. Remember high school speech class? Stand in front of the mirror at home and run through your remarks. Don't read your written testimony word for word; verbally deliver the key points; use the written testimony to expound on each point using appropriate data. Have family, staff or colleagues listen to your testimony and then practice by answering the questions they pose to you.

Bring copies. Provide enough copies of your written testimony so that every member of the committee gets a copy; be sure to ask staff to see that any absent committee members receive copies also.

Make it easy. Written testimony should have a cover sheet that very clearly indicates your personal contact information and the information of any organization you represent. Providing a cover sheet with contact info indicates your interest and willingness in

serving as an information resource to those on the committee. When questions arise, legislators know how to contact you quickly and easily.

The "Golden Rule." Treat legislators with the same courtesy and respect that you expect from them. No matter what happens, don't lose your cool. You are playing on the legislators' turf and they set the rules. If legislators aren't paying attention to what you say, don't seem interested and/or interrupt, just "go with the flow." You can only control your behavior which should at all times be above reproach. It's the same basic principle learned in kindergarten: play nice, don't throw sand, and only eat your share of the white paste.

Follow-up. Always follow-up with a timely note of thanks that summarizes your key message points and offers any additional information requested.