

Joint Finance Committee Hearings

How to Prepare!

The Joint Finance Committee (JFC) usually holds 3-5 hearings around the state after the governor releases a budget. It's critical that the 16 members of JFC hear, repeatedly, about the Tobacco Prevention and Control Program. With a steady presence during the public hearing process, legislators see that tobacco prevention and control remains important and necessary.

Actions in order of priority

1. Attend a hearing and present verbal testimony for information only.
2. Attend a hearing and register comments for information only.
3. Submit written testimony and email it to JFC, copying your own legislators.

Prepare in advance

Identify people who can attend. Dates and locations are given with little notice, but typically occur in March or April.

For those testifying:

Your testimony is your story. Part of your story can include how tobacco use impacts people who live in your county, healthcare costs, lives lost, etc. But, when possible, focus on a personal aspect, how has tobacco impacted your life?

- Testimony should be short – No more than two minutes. They will interrupt you if it goes long.
- Testimony should be clear – State your message at the beginning and the end.
- Testimony should be heartfelt – Make your legislators FEEL the importance of your message.

Google the facility ahead of time. Allow ample time for parking and call the facility in advance for accommodations if needed (i.e. accessible parking location).

Transportation, meals, childcare – make all these arrangements BEFORE the hearing, so you don't find yourself having to leave before you're called to testify. **PLAN FOR A LONG DAY!**

Connect and coordinate with your colleagues. Attend all calls for preparation.

What to expect at the hearing

The earlier you arrive, the earlier you will be called to testify. If you know you need to leave the hearing early, then plan to arrive at least two hours before it begins to sign in to speak.

You will need to sign in when you arrive.

- Indicate whether you intend to give verbal testimony.
- Indicate your purpose for attending.

For anyone paid by TPCP funds (including those carpooling with staff who will be reimbursed for travel costs or anyone who receives TPCP funding for meals at the hearing), your purpose is always EDUCATION or FOR INFORMATION ONLY. Never identify yourself as a “supporter.”

If you’re representing yourself (not on work time; not receiving meal or travel reimbursement), you can communicate any support or ask.

The day will be LONG! Bring snacks and meals. Bring activities to keep occupied while waiting. In the past, speakers have waited 6-8 hours to testify.

Take photos at the hearing to submit to local media, and post on social media. Use hashtags provided by TA providers.

Answering questions

Sometimes lawmakers will ask a person questions after their testimony. They range from friendly questions to tricky questions. They could ask about the program’s impact or specific funded activities. If you don’t know an answer, say you will get back to them.

If lawmakers ask you questions, media may follow up with you to ask questions too.

Support Available

State partners and other technical assistance (TA) providers will attend. They’re available before and during the hearing to help you practice your testimony (your story).

Ask a TA provider to review all testimony that’s FOR INFORMATION ONLY to ensure it does not contain a lobbying ask.