Sample Testimony

Testimony is how you provide your opinion or statement about a bill with lawmakers when that bill is being considered in a committee. Since most bills never make it out of committee, a House or Senate committee hearing is one of the most important stages of the legislative process. Testimony - whether written or oral - helps committee members understand the real impact of the proposed legislation. Oftentimes, testimony is invited from survivors, families, experts, or community members. It is also usually open to the general public, sometimes even those who may live in a different state or country. The witnesses' perspectives shape how lawmakers think about an issue, can influence amendments, and help determine whether a bill moves forward.

This resource provides an overview of testifying on a bill. However, rules vary from state to state and even from committee to committee, frequently depending on the discretion of an assigned committee chair. Always check the guidelines of a specific committee regarding testimony rules and requirements.

Types of Testimony

Invited vs Public

Invited testimony comes from speakers specifically invited by the committee to present. This might include subject-matter experts, agency officials, or key stakeholders. Invited testimony typically comes first and may be given more time.

After invited speakers, the committee will open the floor to **public testimony**. While anyone may usually sign up, time limits are often strict. Public testimony allows survivors, families, advocates, and community members to share their perspectives on the legislation being heard.

Oral vs Written

Oral testimony involves spoken remarks during the committee hearing. For public testimony, time limits are often three or less minutes. Oral testimony creates a direct, personal moment with lawmakers and shows visible support. It also allows committee members to ask follow-up questions; however, it's not unusual for there to be no questions asked of survivors. Oral testimony is particularly impactful when there are personal, emotional, or lived-experiences to share. Subject matter experts who present oral testimony are often asked questions by the committee, and they may provide "leave-behind" materials to committee members as well.

Written testimony is a typed statement submitted to the committee. This is usually done by e-mail, an online portal, or as a printed copy. If provided as a printed copy, the committee clerk usually asks that enough copies are provided for each committee member to receive one. Written testimony allows witnesses an opportunity to become part of the official record without showing up in-person. It does not require speaking and allows for input without time pressure. Written testimony may also be provided as a supplement to oral testimony.

Sample Testimony

The following samples are provided as a starting point to support the development of personal testimony. Individuals should freely adapt this content to make it their own. Content may also need to be tailored, based on the specific provisions of proposed legislation and state context.

Sample: Advocate or Professional

Chair [Last Name] and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. My name is [Name], and I am a [role/affiliation] who works with children and families affected by sexual abuse [and/or other issue(s) relevant to the bill].

In my work, I have seen the dynamics of childhood sexual abuse firsthand. This is a crime that thrives on silence. Abusers groom victims to keep their actions secret. Survivors face significant fear, shame, and stigma - preventing many from telling anyone for years or decades, if they ever disclose at all.

The misuse of NDAs takes the silencing tactic used by abusers and gives it the force of law. These agreements silence victims, hide patterns of misconduct, and limit a community's ability to keep children safe. They do nothing to help survivors heal - and only protect bad actors.

Trey's Law ensures that no survivor of child sexual abuse can be prevented from speaking about their own experience whenever and however they choose to do so. Prohibiting NDAs in child sexual abuse cases aligns with other best practices in child protection, promotes transparency, and improves accountability.

This is a straightforward, bipartisan measure: it does not affect the ability to settle cases; it simply prevents survivors from being forced into secrecy.

I respectfully urge you to advance Trey's Law from this committee with a favorable vote.

Thank you for your consideration. I'm available for any questions.

Sample: Survivor or Family Member

Chair [Last Name] and Members of the Committee,

My name is [Name], and I'm here to speak in strong support of Trey's Law.

For me, this issue is deeply personal. [Briefly share your story in a few sentences, keeping only what feels safe and

necessary]. When abuse happens, the harm is devastating—but being forced into silence adds an entirely different kind of pain and powerlessness. NDAs only protect bad actors and often pressure survivors and families to hide the truth at the very moment when they need safety, support, and transparency.

Trey's Law is simple: it ensures that survivors can't be legally required to keep quiet about child sexual abuse. Silence protects abusers, not children. This bill gives survivors the freedom to speak about their own lives, seek healing, and prevent others from being harmed.

Passing Trey's Law will help families like mine—and many others you will never meet—move forward without fear of being threatened or silenced. It is a seemingly small change with enormous impact that we hope you will support with a favorable vote to advance this bill.

I respectfully urge you to pass Trey's Law and protect victims' voices across our state.

Thank you for your time.

Sample: Community Member

Chair [Last Name] and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. My name is [Name], and I am here today simply as a community member who cares deeply about the safety and well-being of children in our state.

I'm not a professional in this field, but I do know that when harm happens to a child, the last thing they should face is pressure to remain silent. NDAs in cases of child sexual abuse and trafficking keep communities in the dark and protect bad actors. Forced silence adds to the suffering, and it certainly does not keep children safe.

Trey's Law is a straightforward solution. It does not prevent people from settling cases; it simply ensures that victims maintain their freedom of speech after enduring the unimaginable. As a resident of this state, I believe we all have a responsibility to make sure our laws put public safety–and especially the most vulnerable among us–first.

I respectfully urge you to support and promptly advance Trey's Law out of this committee.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sample: Written Testimony/ Public Comment

Dear Chair [Last Name] and Members of the [Committee Name],

As a citizen of [State], I strongly urge you to pass [Bill Number] and put an end to the misuse of nondisclosure agreements (NDAs) in civil settlements involving child sexual abuse and trafficking. Without this law, our state is protecting perpetrators rather than prioritizing public safety. Survivors of child sexual abuse should never be silenced. Sharing their stories is an important part of healing and a critical mechanism for exposing bad actors in [State].

By allowing NDAs in child sexual abuse and trafficking cases, we perpetuate a system where abusers can avoid accountability while their survivors are left to suffer in silence. Passing [Bill Number] is a necessary step toward justice, transparency, and the protection of children and all citizens. I urge you to support this bill and stand with survivors.

Thank you for your consideration.

[Name]