



RI Advocacy Action Steps

A guide to state policy and testifying at the Rhode Island General Assembly

How to Make Your Voice Heard

We believe communities most impacted by public policy have the power to lead and create change. Communities deserve to understand how decisions are made, how to use their voices to influence policy, and how to organize for meaningful change.

Talk to Your Elected Officials

Your elected officials are there to serve YOU, their constituents. Your voice is powerful! Using your home voting address, you can find your representatives (representative and senator) in the General Assembly and local officials at bit.ly/RIvoterinfo.

Be Ready to Share

- 1) **Who you are**
- 2) **Your ask:** clearly state your/your organization's position on a bill (support or oppose) and include the bill number(s)
- 3) **Your why:** share information about organization or your personal story and explain your ask (vote for or against)



Submit testimony to the General Assembly

Public hearings give you and your community the chance to share your voice on proposed legislation. When you testify, the information you share (your testimony) becomes part of the public record and is reviewed by legislators as they consider whether to support or oppose a bill. You can testify verbally in person, submit written, or both.

If you testify in person, you will have two minutes, so keep your message clear and simple. Use the bill number(s) in your testimony. Avoid jargon, and remember, **you are the expert in your own experience.**

Even if you plan to speak, try to submit written testimony in case time runs out. Whether you testify in person or in writing, be sure to email your testimony to the appropriate committee and, when possible, to your elected officials.

How to find bill info, and how to submit testimony

- 1) **Visit the RI Legislature Website:** www.rilegislature.gov
- 2) **Click on Committee Calendars:** On the homepage, look for a link labeled Committee Calendars. This section shows which bills are scheduled to be heard, and where.
- 3) **Review the Hearing Details:** The hearing notice will list the committee name and the bills scheduled for that day and location of the hearing and the email address to use to submit written testimony.
- 4) **Click on the Bill Number:** Clicking on a bill number will take you to the bill's page, where you can read a summary, review the full bill text, and see who sponsored the bill.
- 5) **Find Where to Submit Testimony:** The hearing notice includes an email address for submitting written testimony, and information about submission deadlines. All testimony should include your name/organization name, the bill number, and your position (support/oppose). If possible, submit your testimony as a pdf.

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Template for written testimony

[Your First and Last Name]

[Affiliation(s), if any – for example: Parent, Student, Educator, Community Member]

[Address and phone number, if you feel comfortable sharing]

[Name of Committee and Bill – for example: House Finance Committee, HB###]

[Date]

Paragraph 1: Introduction and Position

- Begin with a brief introduction. Share your name and who you are. For example: “My name is Jane Doe, and I am a parent of two children attending public school.”
- Next, clearly state the bill you are testifying about and whether you support or oppose it.
 - Supporting example: “I am testifying in favor of HB XXX, which would increase funding to support student mental health by increasing the number of school social workers.”
 - Opposing example: “I am testifying in opposition to HB XXX, which would decrease funding for public schools.”

Paragraph 2: Personal Experience

- Describe how this issue has affected you, your child(ren), or your community. You may also explain how this issue could affect you in the future. For example: “Lack of childcare has made it difficult for me to find a full-time job to support my family.”
- You may also share what could have helped make your experience better or reduced challenges or barriers.

Paragraph 3: Solution or Recommendation

- Explain what actions or changes could help address the issue. What should the General Assembly do to improve the situation? For example: “Provide districts with adequate funding to improve the student-to-school social worker ratio so students who need support do not fall through the cracks.”

Paragraph 4: Call to Action and Closing

- End with a clear call to action. For example: “I urge this committee to support HB XXX to better support students and families across Rhode Island.”
- Thank the committee for their time and consideration. For example: “Thank you for the opportunity to share my testimony.”