

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?

- Contact the U-M Washington D.C. Government Relations Office and let them 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 printed 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;
 - Practice your oral testimony for delivery and understanding, and
 - Promote your testimony through our media relations; and
 - Answer any other questions or concerns you may have.

Key items to note for your oral testimony:

- Be respectful (e.g., do not interrupt a Member, 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 are 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.
- Limit the use of acronyms; if you need to use one, be sure to define it in the beginning.

Below are suggested responses if you do not understand, know how to answer, have the answer at that moment but could obtain it, or a question is beyond your expertise:

- “That question is beyond my expertise. I’m sorry that 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, you could say, “I don’t know how to answer this part of your question but what I do know is....”