

Protocol for Crafting Policy Positions

Purpose

Think through crafting your own argument for a specific policy change. Identify arguments to use and think about ways to implement the guidelines and considerations for crafting testimony below in your own advocacy around issue impacting your school or community.

Materials Needed

- Chart paper
- Markers

Process

1. Divide into a group with the team from your school. If you are not here with a school colleague, join another participant who is also here on their own.
2. **10 minutes:** As a team, identify a specific policy area or issue to build an argument around. That policy can be one you heard about today that will be addressed in the legislature this session or one that currently impacts your school community (students, classroom, school). Once you've agreed upon a policy or policy area, write it on the top of your chart paper.
 - a. Here are some examples of policies or policy areas you could explore today. Feel free to draw from this list or select your own: specific changes to your state funding formula, expanding ELO opportunities, teacher recruitment incentives, increasing access to mental health professionals in schools, increasing the number of counselors in schools, increasing access to higher education opportunities (expanding dual enrollment or addressing college affordability)
3. **5 minutes:** Discuss how you would advocate around this issue. Are you proposing a change to existing law or are you crafting an argument around a piece of legislation that will be discussed this session?
 - a. If you are proposing a change to an existing law, skip to step 4.
 - b. If you are crafting an argument around a piece of legislation that will be discussed this session, are you in favor of this legislation passing or are you advocating that the legislature vote no? Write your position on your chart paper.
4. **30 minutes:** Crafting your argument. As a group, think through the following questions, capturing notes of the key points on your chart paper. When your group has finished, post your chart paper on the wall. Keep in mind that many legislators are not practitioners - they may not know the nuanced impact their decisions would have in your context. Be careful to avoid jargon and craft your thinking as clearly and concisely as possible.
 - a. Why is this issue important to us? How does it impact our students? Our school? Our community?

- b. What are some facts that support our position? Think about data sources you may have access to.
 - c. What is important for the legislators on the committee to know about the impact of implementing this policy change?
 - d. Do you have suggestions for different or more impactful actions they can take to address this same problem or concern?
5. **15 minutes:** Gallery walk. Walk around the room reading through other team's positions and arguments. Capture any comments or additions on sticky notes and post them on the chart paper.
6. **10 minutes:** As a group, read through the comments your team received. Make any necessary edits or changes to your position or arguments.
7. **10 minutes:** Full group debrief. How did this process go for you? What worked well? What was a struggle?

Guidelines + Considerations for Crafting Testimony

- Stick to the time limit (approximately 3-5 minutes)
- Be sure to clearly state your full name, your role, your school/district, and your town
- State your position at the beginning of your testimony
- Build your argument clearly
- Be succinct
- Be factual
- Avoid jargon
- Make sure you understand the proposed legislation, including whether it changes existing statutes or creates new ones or both
- Support your argument with evidence
- Talk about your local context
- Bring written copies of your testimony (standard rule: number of people on the committee + 10)
- If your arguments have already been made previously during the hearing, don't repeat them - abbreviate/summarize
- Close by reiterating you position.
- Offer to answer any questions and express interest and availability to engage further (at a work session or in another venue)
- If you are unable to attend in person, the legislature accepts electronically submitted testimony