



Guide for submitting written legislative testimony

This guide provides general guidance and tips, as well as examples and templates for written testimony to legislative committees. This guidance assumes your organization may engage in permissible lobbying.

LOBBYING AND NONPROFITS

Please note — all nonprofits are legally permitted to engage in lobbying, though you need to check if your organization permits it or not. Review [this resource](#) on nonprofit lobbying from Bolder Advocacy for more guidance.

While we understand that Kansas and Missouri — as well as the committees therein — are different in how legislative testimony is submitted. We are aiming to provide high-level information on what we recommend regarding testimony writing.

If you have questions at any time, reach out to Nate Madden (nmadden@healthforward.org), Policy Impact Strategist at Health Forward Foundation.

The items covered in this guidance include key tips, an annotated template for written testimony, and an actual example of written testimony submitted by Health Forward.

Key tips

- **Letterhead** – Please put your letter on your organization’s letterhead. Don’t forget to save it as a PDF before you send it off. *Seek feedback from multiple people in your organization!*
 - A quick note on **Missouri** — written testimony is submitted in an online portal, which does not allow for letterhead submission or embedded hyperlinks.
- **Date** – Use the date that you intend to submit testimony, typically the date of the legislative committee hearing. Check committee guidelines for testimony – they may vary!
- **Addressee** – Be sure to address your letter to the Chairperson of the legislative committee. Also, be sure to include the name of the committee and Capitol address in your testimony (see examples below). You may also email copies of your testimony directly to key legislators, particularly if they request it
- **Regarding** – Be sure to include the **bill number** and **your position** in the testimony letter. Note that including a bill number and your position constitutes lobbying. Before submitting testimony, please ensure that your organization can and does engage in lobbying.
- **Length** – Be as concise as possible. Typically, one page, single-spaced is what you should aim for but 500 words or less is a good target. Legislators tend to be short on time and appreciate brevity.
- **Resource links** – These letters are meant to be resources for legislators and staff to do more of their own research, you will be embedding hyperlinks throughout. Legislators also appreciate data and sources to substantiate your position. **Please double-check links prior to submitting.** If some of your links don’t work, it is likely that the information you substantiated your comment with will not get used.
- **Purpose and equity** – If you are submitting testimony, it is imperative that you explicitly refer to your organization’s mission or purpose. Additionally, be forward on how the issue impacts equity in the communities you serve.
- **Appeal to hearts and minds** – include positions and data that address the social and economic impacts of the legislation. Some legislators lead and legislate with their hearts and others with their minds, so including both social and economic impacts increases the

likelihood your testimony will resonate with them. Ensure that your testimony includes case making resonate with legislators, where possible, i.e. to include impacts on residents of rural, urban and suburban areas and to call out any disparities.

- **Asset Based Language** – Always work to phrase your letters in an asset-based way. Define people by their aspirations and contributions before noting their challenges and investing in them for their continued benefit to society.
- **Community Voice** – Where possible, incorporate firsthand experiences from people in the communities you serve to add narrative weight to your work. You can see this in our example testimony below.

[Continued below]

ANNOTATED TESTIMONY TEMPLATE

DATE

NAME OF LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEE

ADDRESS OF STATE CAPITOL

CITY, STATE ZIP

Insert a bolded title immediately after the address to indicate support/opposition, bill number and a short bill title.

COMMITTEE CHAIR [NAME] AND MEMBERS OF COMMITTEE:

In this opening paragraph, you will typically introduce your organization by name and reiterate support/opposition and bill number. Use this space to briefly summarize “who” your organization is, the ‘why’ of your position on the legislation, usually related to your mission, programming, and/or strategic focus. Pick a strong datapoint or argument and start to make the case about why they should adopt your position. Be sure to include links to relevant information.

The second paragraph is where to clearly state why the bill is good/bad. Then do more case-making and add data points supporting your position. While any data points can work, we recommend that you use ones most relevant to the state you’re submitting testimony in, either from a state agency or other group about the state. Or you can use the experience of another similarly situated state that has adopted similar legislation to make your case.

The third paragraph is where you focus on the social and economic implications of the legislation. Health Forward typically discusses our communities of focus - people of color and people living in rural areas. Again, where possible, use data that discusses inequities and disparities, such as health, economic, or other social outcomes and how the legislation will improve or exacerbate them.

Your final paragraph should again reiterate your stance and the bill number. We also provide a short offer to follow-up if they’d like more information and typically include the signatory’s email address.

Sincerely,

SIGNATORY FROM YOUR ORGANIZATION
TITLE
ORGANIZATION NAME

**AN EXAMPLE LETTER FROM
HEALTH FORWARD FOUNDATION
IS LETTER IS INCLUDED BELOW.**

January 31, 2024

House Committee on Higher Education Budget
State Capitol
300 SW 10th Street
Topeka, KS 66612

Health Forward Foundation opposition to HB 2460 – prohibition of certain actions on diversity, equity, inclusion, and patriotism in faculty and student hiring and admissions.

Chair Howe and Members of the Committee:

On behalf of Health Forward Foundation (Health Forward), I submit this letter of testimony in opposition to House Bill 2460. Health Forward works to support and build inclusive, powerful, and healthy communities characterized by racial equity and economically just systems. We oppose this legislation because any limitation on post-secondary institutional consideration of diversity, equity and inclusion in their hiring and admissions processes will have chilling effects on ensuring cultural competency in our educational workforce, student bodies and our future workforce. Additionally, this legislation will cause direct economic damage to the state.

HB 2460 would have a negative impact on the health sciences professional pipeline in Kansas. Across Kansas, nearly 16% of hospital positions are vacant, according to the [Kansas Hospital Association](#). Research conducted by the [Pew Research Center in 2023](#) found a majority of employed U.S. adults (56%) agree that focusing on increasing DEI is a good thing. This bill would give people seeking to be trained and practice in the health sciences pause when choosing to come here. By hindering students' and physicians' ability to learn and work in an environment that actively supports tailored and culturally competent care, recruitment of health professionals to Kansas will be more difficult.

HB 2460 will also have a negative impact on health outcomes in Kansas. A diverse and culturally competent healthcare workforce reduces health disparities by building trusted relationships or even communicating diagnoses and treatment plans in a way that resonates with patients, according to the [Kaiser Family Foundation](#). But diversity and cultural competency in the provision of health care will be difficult to achieve without hiring educators and admitting students with cultural competency and diversity in mind and commitment to these institutions reflecting Kansas' increasingly diverse population.

Additionally, recent research suggests that anti-diversity, equity, and inclusion legislation such as this will be costly to the state overall. Economic modeling done by The Perryman Group – an independent economic and policy research firm – shows that through 2030, policy perceived to be discriminatory is likely to cost Kansas nearly \$900 million in economic output and over 1,400 jobs per year (nearly 8,500 jobs total). This bill will cut against the economic prosperity for all Kansans.

Health Forward asks legislators on this committee to vote no on HB 2460. This legislation will move Kansas backward in many ways – employment, economics, health outcomes, and as a place welcoming to those from a variety of backgrounds. Achieving progress in diverse and culturally competent educational environments was made possible by positive affirmations and actions to ensure those making hiring and admissions decision consider the diverse makeup of those institutions. Please feel free to reach out to me at nmadden@healthforward.org if you have any questions or requests for additional information.

Respectfully,

Nathan J. Madden, Ph.D.
Impact Strategist - Policy
Health Forward Foundation