

MOCK COMMITTEE ASSIGNMENT

I. PURPOSE

The Texas Legislature relies on constituent testimony to understand how proposed laws affect real people, communities, and professional practice. This assignment is designed to prepare you for participating in an actual legislative committee hearing. You will move beyond theory and draft written and oral testimony, the same materials that advocates, practitioners, and stakeholders submit during a real committee hearing at the Capitol.

II. SCENARIO

A bill related to social work practice, client well-being, or an NASW policy priority has been scheduled for a hearing. You have signed up to testify, and the committee clerk has notified you that you will have 2 minutes to present your position to the committee. Your goal is to offer clear, compelling testimony that helps lawmakers understand the issue and informs their decisions.

III. INSTRUCTIONS

Step 1: Select Your Issue

- Use a current [NASW-TX Policy Priority](#) issue.

Step 2: Draft "Written Testimony"

Create a formal, printed handout to leave with the committee clerk and legislators (one per committee member).

- Format: 1 page, professional font (Arial/Times New Roman, 12pt), clear headings.
- Header: Must include "Testimony of [Your Name]" and "IN SUPPORT/OPPOSITION of [Bill Number]".
- Content:
 - Introduction: Who you are (constituent/student).
 - The Position: Clearly state if you support or oppose the bill.
 - The "Why": Use data/facts to support your stance.
 - The Personal Connection (OPTIONAL): A brief, professional anecdote illustrating the need for this policy.

Step 3: Draft "Oral Testimony"

Write the script you would speak into the microphone.

- Length: Strictly 300–400 words (approx. 2 minutes spoken).
- Tone: Conversational but respectful. "Eye contact" style (written for the ear, not the eye).
- Required Elements:
 - Greeting: "Good morning, Chair [Name] and members of the committee."
 - The "Hook": A compelling opening sentence.
 - The Ask: Explicitly asking them to "Vote Yes" or "Vote No."

IV. How This Assignment Plays Out in the Classroom

Below is a step-by-step guide for faculty on how to integrate this mock committee hearing experience into a social work course.

1. Introduce the Legislative Process

- Begin with a short overview explaining:
 - How bills move through the Texas Legislature
 - What committee hearings are and why testimony matters
 - Optional: [NASW-TX Webinar: Delivering Effective Testimony to Drive Change](#)

2. Issue Selection (In Class or Asynchronous)

- Students choose the bill or policy issue they want to testify on.
 - Provide students with the [NASW-TX Policy Priorities](#) and [NASW-TX Policy Briefs](#)

3. Workshop the Written & Oral Testimony (In Class or Asynchronous)

- Students begin drafting their one-page written testimony and two-minute oral testimony. Faculty can structure this in several ways, including a peer review session where students exchange drafts and use a rubric to give focused feedback, or assigning the drafts as homework to be submitted before the mock hearing.

4. Host the Mock Committee Hearing (In Class)

- Faculty (or a group of students) plays the Committee Chair and committee members.
- A timer is used to enforce the 2-minute testimony limit.
- How It Works: Each student will approach the witness table, deliver their oral testimony, submit their written testimony to the committee, and then answer one or two follow-up questions from the mock committee.

5. Committee Feedback

- After all presentations, the committee offers general observations:
 - What made testimony effective
 - Challenges (timing, clarity, evidence)

6. Reflection or Debrief (Homework or Closing Activity)

- Students submit a short reflection on:
 - What they learned about legislative advocacy
 - What they would change in their testimony
 - Whether they feel more prepared to engage in policy practice