



WASHINGTON PHYSICIANS FOR SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

Guide to Giving Public Testimony

By Dr. Daniel Low

Big principles:

- 1) Speak honestly and from the heart
- 2) It's normal to feel nervous, this is ok. Anything that's important should engender some nerves
- 3) Time yourself in advance, speaking aloud at a natural pace, so you know how long it takes
- 4) Consider having multiple speeches, one that is 60 seconds or less practiced, and one that is 90 seconds or less practiced. Sometimes you are only given 60 seconds to speak, sometimes 90+
- 5) If you reference a study/data, know that study and have it on-hand to provide to committee members (by email)
- 6) If you get a question on follow-up that you don't know, remember that you can always deflect by saying one of two things:
 - a) use a personal example, i.e. in my experience I have seen x, y and z. No one can challenge your personal experience.
 - b) if there's a much broader question, you can say that you can get that information and you would be happy to send it via email to the legislator.
 - c) you can combine a) and b) above to sound good, for instance, "Dr. Low, do you think that paying for housing for the chronically homeless will result in more people intentionally becoming homeless because of new entitlements" Response: "I do not have this data on-hand, though I would be happy to send you some after this meeting, but I can tell you from personal experience with patients who are housing unstable that this won't happen - the last thing my housing unstable patients want is the stigma of being homeless. I don't think this will occur because..."

Formula for your actual testimony:

*Sample testimony advocating in favor of [HB 1866](#), the Apple Health & Homes Act

- 1) *Thank the speaker/committee.*
 - E.g. Thank you Madame Chair and members of the committee.
- 2) *Introduce self, who you're speaking on behalf of (if time), and your stance.*



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- E.g. My name is Dr. Daniel Low, I'm speaking on behalf of Washington Physicians for Social Responsibility, and I am speaking in favor of HB 1866.

3) *State why this matters to you.*

- E.g. I'm a family medicine doc at a community health center in Renton and this legislation is important to me because I see and treat people experiencing homelessness on a daily basis, and I see what a difference stable housing has on people's lives.

4) *Use a personal example, if time allows, use an idiosyncratic detail to make it more real.*

- E.g. Just last week, I saw Mr. Jones in clinic. Mr. Jones has been living on the street for the last 2 years, having become homeless in the setting of an opiate addiction after being prescribed oxycodone after a knee injury. Mr. Jones was the star football player of his high school in Georgia growing up, and dreamed of a possible future in the NFL, but after his knee injury, everything came crashing down. Without housing, he has nowhere to store his insulin, and as a result, his diabetes is completely out of control.

5) *Use data to generalize a personal story.*

- E.g. And Mr. Jones isn't alone. In WA State last year, there were over [X] people experiencing homelessness whose health suffered dramatically as a result. It's why people experiencing chronic homelessness die, on average, 20 years earlier than those who are stably housed.

6) *Return to personal story and link story to action.*

- E.g. This is why we need HB 1866. I cannot effectively care for patients like Mr. Jones who have nowhere to go or nowhere to store their belongings. HB recognizes that chronic homelessness is a medical condition. Please vote in favor of HB 1866.

Testimony Example 1 (90 seconds):

Thank you Madame Chair and members of the committee. My name is Dr. Daniel Low, I'm speaking on behalf of Washington Physicians for Social Responsibility, and I am speaking in favor of HB 1866. I'm a family medicine doc at a community health center in Renton and this legislation is important to me because I see and treat people experiencing homelessness on a daily basis, and I see what a difference stable housing has on people's lives.

Just last week, I saw Mr. Jones in clinic. Mr. Jones has been living on the street for the last 2 years, having become homeless in the setting of an opiate addiction after being prescribed oxycodone after a knee injury. Mr. Jones was the star football player of his high school in Georgia growing up, and dreamed of a possible future in the NFL, but after his knee injury, everything came crashing down. Without housing, he has nowhere to store his insulin, and as a result, his diabetes is completely out of control. And Mr. Jones isn't alone. In WA State last year, there were over 10,000 people experiencing



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homelessness whose health suffered dramatically as a result. It's why people experiencing chronic homelessness die, on average, 20 years earlier than those who are stably housed. This is why we need HB 1866. I cannot effectively care for patients who have nowhere to go or nowhere to store their medications. Housing improves health and reduces cost. HB recognizes that chronic homelessness is a medical condition. Please vote in favor of HB 1866. Thank you.

Testimony Example 2 (60 seconds):

Thank you Madame Chair and members of the committee. My name is Dr. Daniel Low and I am speaking in favor of HB 1866. I'm a family medicine doc at a community health center in Renton and this legislation is important to me because I see and treat people experiencing homelessness on a daily basis. Just last week, I saw Mr. Jones in clinic. Mr. Jones has been living on the street for the last 2 years, having become homeless in the setting of an opiate addiction after being prescribed oxycodone after a knee injury. Without housing, he has nowhere to store his insulin, and as a result, his diabetes is completely out of control. And Mr. Jones isn't alone. In WA State last year, there were over 10,000 people whose health suffered due to homelessness. It's why people experiencing chronic homelessness die, on average, 20 years earlier than those who are stably housed. I cannot effectively care for patients who have nowhere to go or nowhere to store their medications. HB recognizes that chronic homelessness is a medical condition. Please vote in favor of HB 1866. Thank you.

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