



Telling Your Story...

...about your experiences as a child care provider, early childhood teacher, or parent using child care
...about the importance of quality child care and early education to children and families

Everyone has a story to tell.

Personal stories are a very effective way to help legislators and policymakers understand how issues, policies and legislation affect real people in real ways.

Identify one aspect of your experiences that you can use to create a memorable verbal snapshot.

Choose one focus for your story. Don't try to tell your entire story. Including too much information and detail will make your story less effective and less likely to be remembered.

Have a clear message.

Always keep in mind the reason why you are telling your story. Make sure that there is a clear connection between your story and a current issue, policy or piece of legislation.

Keep your audience in mind.

Make sure that the message in your story is interesting and relevant to the audience who will hear it.

Share your passion.

The more expressive you are, the more you will engage your audience and the more compelling and effective your story will be. Use words and descriptions to help your audience feel like they are there with you in your story.

Plan, and then practice, practice, practice!

When speaking to policymakers and legislators, you typically have about **two or three minutes** in which to tell your story and communicate your message. Therefore, to be effective, you must plan what you will say and then practice saying it. Write yourself a script. Practice getting the words right and then practice adding expression and passion. Time yourself – make sure that you can speak clearly and at a reasonable pace and wrap up your story and message in the time you will have.

Resources:

Andresen, K, and M. Morehouse. 2007. 5 Elements of a Good Story. Network for Good Learning Center. <http://www.fundraising123.org/article/5-elements-good-story>

Andresen, K, and M. Morehouse. 2007. 7 Ways to Improve Your Storytelling. Network for Good Learning Center. <http://www.fundraising123.org/article/7-ways-improve-your-storytelling>

How to Give Public Testimony

One way you can be an effective advocate for early childhood care and education is to give testimony or input on legislation, regulations and policies that affect early childhood care and education. Testimony or comments may be given in person at state and local public hearings and legislative committee meetings.

If you are not comfortable with public speaking, or even if you are, writing letters to legislators and government officials is also an important way to advocate. Because time is limited, relatively few people have the chance to give public testimony or comments on any particular issue, but everyone has the chance to write letters.

Find out when public hearings and legislative committee meetings are held.

Sign up with early childhood and education advocacy and professional organizations to receive email alerts about issues important to you. Visit the California Legislature web site for information on current and upcoming events: <http://www.leginfo.ca.gov/> . Visit the Contra Costa County Board of Supervisors web site for a schedule of their meetings: <http://www.co.contra-costa.ca.us/index.aspx?nid=193> .

Find out how you can testify or provide comment.

Opportunities to give testimony before legislative committees and public agencies are usually arranged ahead of time. Professional and advocacy organizations often line up knowledgeable individuals to provide testimony, so let these organizations know that you are available and interested in providing testimony when issues related to your areas of expertise come before legislative committees and government agencies. Public hearings usually allow time for members of the public to provide comments. If you are interested in giving input at a public hearing, find out ahead of time how the meeting will be run and what procedures will be used for giving testimony or providing comment. Be sure to arrive early and to sign in on the list of persons wanting time to speak.

Put your testimony or comments in writing.

You will have only a limited time to speak, usually 3-5 minutes. It is therefore very important to organize your thoughts ahead of time and to write down the points you want to make so that you can be sure to cover them in the time you are given. Having your testimony or comments in writing will allow you to give copies to committee members to help them remember what you said. Be sure to include your contact information along with the text of your testimony or comments so that committee members can contact you for more information if needed.

Be concise and stay on topic.

Begin by stating your name and where you are from. Talk about your personal and/or professional experiences as appropriate and explain how your experiences relate to the specific legislation, regulation or policy under consideration. You can also speak about related issues, but be sure to keep your message focused and clear. In summary, "Be brief. Be sincere. Be seated." (Franklin Delano Roosevelt).

Resources:

"How to Give Public Testimony to the State Vocational Rehabilitation Committee".
<http://labor.alaska.gov/svrc/public-testimony/tips-public-testimony.pdf>

"State House Basics: Giving Testimony on Infant-Toddler Issues". ZERO TO THREE Policy Center.
<http://www.zerotothree.org/public-policy/newsletters/tips-for-giving-testimony-on.html>



Tips for Visiting a State Legislator

Adapted from Partners in Policymaking

<http://www.pipcalifornia.org/topics/advocacy-resources/>

Here are some tips for planning a visit to your state Senator or Assemblymember in Sacramento:

- 1) Find the names of your state Senator and Assemblymember if you don't know them. Go to <http://www.leginfo.ca.gov/yourleg.html> and enter your zip code.
- 2) Write a few sentences about the issue that concerns you and why you want to meet with the legislator. Be sure to have these sentences in front of you when you call the legislator's office so that you can clearly and concisely explain why you want to meet.
- 3) Decide when you would like to visit.
- 4) Call the legislator's office in Sacramento. Ask to speak to the person who schedules visits for the legislator.
- 5) Explain that you are a resident in the legislator's district, why you would like to visit, and when you would like to make the visit. Use the information you wrote down in #2 above. If the representative is not available, ask to meet with the staff person who handles the issue you are interested in.
- 6) You will often be asked to mail, fax or email a letter requesting the meeting. If so, send a short letter that states: (a) who you are, (b) what group you represent, (c) names of anyone who will attend the meeting with you, (d) why you want to meet, (e) when you want to meet, and (f) your contact information (phone number, address, email address).
- 7) If a written request for a meeting is required, call back about a week after sending your request to follow up on scheduling a meeting.

When you visit:

- Take a short, written statement of the issue you are concerned about and what your position is on the issue. Leave this statement with the legislator or staff member so that they remember the purpose of your visit and your views. Be sure to include your contact information so that they can contact you to follow up if necessary.
- Take a camera to get a picture of the visit.
- Be at the legislator's office 5 minutes early for the meeting.
- Write a thank you letter after the visit. Remind the legislator or staff member of the issue you are concerned about and your views on the issue. Be sure to include your contact information and say that you are available if they have future questions.



Writing Letters to Legislators /

<http://www.familyvoicesofca.org/writinglegislators.doc>

Cartas a los Legisladores

<http://www.familyvoicesofca.org/writinglegislatorsspanish.doc>

Addressing Letters

California State Assemblymembers/Senators

The Honorable (full name of legislator) California State Assembly State Capitol, Room <u>(number)</u> Sacramento, CA 94249	The Honorable (full name of legislator) California State Senate State Capitol, Room <u>(number)</u> Sacramento, CA 95814
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Dear Assemblymember (last name):

Dear Senator (last name):

Congressional Representatives

The Honorable (Full Name of Legislator) House of Representatives Washington, DC 20515	The Honorable (Full Name of Legislator) United States Senate Washington, DC 20510
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Dear Representative (last name):

Dear Senator (last name):

Tips for Writing

- Type or write legibly
- Include the bill number in the first sentence, or describe the issue you are writing about and what you are asking the legislator to do
- Be brief and clear (one page or less, one issue per letter)
- Use your own words and avoid the appearance of a form letter
- Give your reasons for supporting or opposing a bill/proposals
- Use a personal story, to show the impact of the bill/proposal on your family
- Be polite and courteous in your request for support or opposition
- Ask for a response to your request
- Use short sentences
- Proofread your letter
- Be sure to include your full name and home address in the letter

Guide for Letter Writing

Dear Senator/Assemblymember Johnson:

First paragraph:

- I am writing in opposition/support of or about (your issue/proposal/bill number)
- I live in your district
- This issue is important to me/my family because...

Second paragraph

- Personal story explaining how this issue/proposal/bill affects you/family and why you oppose/support it

Third paragraph

- I urge you to oppose/support this issue/proposal/bill
- Ask them to write back and let you know how they will vote or address your issue

Sincerely,

Your name and full address

Cómo Dirigir las Cartas

Asambleístas/Senadores Estatales de California

The Honorable (Nombre completo del legislador) California State Assembly State Capitol, Room <u>(número de oficina)</u> Sacramento, CA 94249	The Honorable (Nombre completo del legislador) California State Senate State Capitol, Room <u>(número de oficina)</u> Sacramento, CA 95814
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Dear Assemblymember (apellido):

Dear Senator (apellido):

Representantes de California ante el Congreso

The Honorable (Nombre completo del legislador) House of Representatives Washington, DC 20515	The Honorable (Nombre completo del legislador) United States Senate Washington, DC 20510
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Dear Representative (apellido):

Dear Senator (apellido):

Claves para Escribir a Legisladores

- Escriba a máquina o a mano legiblemente
- Incluya el número del decreto o ley en la primera oración, o describa el tema sobre el cual usted está escribiendo y lo que usted está pidiendo que hagan los legisladores
- Sea breve y claro (una página o menos, un tema por carta)
- Use sus propias palabras y evite dar la apariencia de que usted está usando una carta-formulario
- Dé sus razones para apoyar u oponer una ley/propuesta
- Use una historia personal, para mostrar el impacto del decreto/propuesta en su familia
- Sea respetuosos y cortés en su pedido de apoyo o de oposición
- Pida una respuesta a su pedido
- Use oraciones cortas
- Revise, edite, repase su carta
- Asegúrese de incluir su nombre completo y su dirección en el cuerpo de su carta

Guía para Escribir una Carta

Estimado Senador/Asambleísta Johnson:

Primer párrafo:

- Yo le escribo en oposición/apoyo de o sobre (su tema/propuesta/número de decreto)
- Yo vivo en su distrito
- Este tema es importante para mi/mi familia porque ...

Segundo párrafo

- Historia personal explicando cómo este tema/propuesta/decreto afecta a usted/su familia y porqué usted se opone/lo apoya

Tercer párrafo

- Yo le urjo a usted a oponerse/apoyar este tema/propuesta/decreto
- Pídale que le correspondan a su carta y que le dejen saber cómo van a votar o abordar el tema

Sinceramente,

Su nombre y dirección completos