



TELLING YOUR STORY

Introduce Yourself

1

- *Your name, where you live (so the elected official knows you are a constituent), and something about yourself (your age, where you work, who you live with, etc.)*
- *Tip: think about how you might make them connect with you*

Problem – What is my issue?

2

- *Clearly describe a problem or barrier that you want to discuss (e.g., finding available infant child care).*
- *Use data, if available, to indicate the depth of the problem.*
- *How does this problem affect you and others' lives?*
- *Tip: you can begin by saying "I want to talk about...outline the basic topic and/or describe the bill".*

Personal Experience – Why I care

3

- *How has this problem or barrier affected you?*
- *How would solving the problem help you and others' lives?*
- *Tip: you could begin with "I care about this issue because..." or "This issue is important to me because..."*

Proposal – What I want them to do?

4

- *Ask. Describe in detail how the elected official can help solve the problem.*
- *Keep language simple.*

Appreciation

5

- *Be sure to express your appreciation for their time and for considering the issues you discussed with them.*

STORY EXAMPLES

Sharing your story by Legislative Testimony:

1 Good Afternoon Chair Rhoades and members of the committee, my name is Jane Doe, spelled D-O-E and I live in Butte, Montana. I am a Program Manager at XYZ a local nonprofit organization, but today I stand before you as a mother of a two year old.

My husband and I moved to Butte about three years ago and shortly after we bought our first house we learned we were expecting our first child. Johnny who is almost two now changed our live forever and also introduced us the world of child care.

2 After Johnny was born, I knew I only had twelve weeks until I had to go back to work. My husband was only able to take a couple days off because we needed his income since most of my time off was unpaid, plus the medical bills. While still trying to figure out how to be a mom to my brand new infant, I started calling around to the child care programs in my area to check them out and find a place I felt good about leaving my infant. I quickly realized finding child care for an infant was going to be a challenge.

3 There were very few child care options that accepted infants, and the ones that did had waitlists unbelievably long. I called every child care provider within a 20-mile radius, and not a single one had an opening for an infant. Some even told me the wait could be over a year. Without reliable infant care, I had no choice but to quit my job and stay home until a child care spot opened up.

Not being able to find child care was stressful, both emotionally and financially. I felt guilt and frustration, and only having one income took its toll. Eventually, I was able to find part-time care with a provider an hour away, but the cost was so high that it barely made sense for me to return to work. The lack of infant child care made me feel trapped and unsupported as a parent.

4 But I believe there is hope and that is why I am here today. I urge this committee to support House Bill 12345. This bill has the ability to increase more infant child care options through the state. Families like mine need more affordable, reliable options so we can work and provide for our families without feeling like we have to sacrifice their care or our financial stability.

5 Thank you your for your time and consideration Mr. Chair and members of the committee.

Sharing Your Story 1:1 with an Elected Official:

1

Parent (Jane): Hi, Representative Rhoades, my name is Jane Doe, I live in your district, thanks for taking a few minutes to chat with me.

Legislator (Rep. Rhoades): Of course, Jane. It's always great to hear directly from constituents. What's on your mind?

Jane: Well, I wanted to talk about something really close to my heart—child care. My husband and I moved to Butte about three years ago, and shortly after, we found out we were expecting our first child, Johnny. He's almost two now, and let me tell you, he turned our world upside down in the best way.

Rep. Rhoades: (laughs) Little ones have a way of doing that.

2

Jane: They sure do! But, oh my goodness, child care has been a journey. After Johnny was born, I had just 12 weeks before I had to go back to work. My husband only got a couple of days off because we couldn't afford for him to take more time—most of my leave was unpaid, and we had medical bills piling up.

Rep. Rhoades: That sounds stressful.

3

Jane: It was. While I was still figuring out how to be a mom to this tiny newborn, I started calling child care programs to find a place I felt good about. But finding infant care? Oh, it was a nightmare.

Rep. Rhoades: I've heard this from other parents too. What happened?

Jane: Well, first of all, very few places even accept infants. And the ones that do? Their waitlists are ridiculous—some over a year long! I called every provider within 20 miles, and not a single one had an opening.

I had no choice but to quit my job. I stayed home until a spot finally opened up, and that took a toll—emotionally, financially, you name it. Eventually, I found part-time care, but it was an hour away and so expensive that I barely broke even going back to work.

Rep. Rhoades: That must have been incredibly hard.

4

Jane: It really was. I felt trapped. But I know I'm not the only one dealing with this. That's why I'm hoping you'll support House Bill 12345.

It's aimed at increasing infant child care options across the state—making it easier for families like mine to find affordable, reliable care. If we can make that happen, it would mean parents wouldn't have to choose between staying home or working just because they can't find care for their baby.

Rep. Rhoades: I'll definitely take a closer look at the bill. Thank you for sharing --- it really puts things into perspective.

5

Jane: Thanks again for taking the time to meet with me, it means a lot.

Rep. Rhoades: Take care, Jane.

WRITE YOUR STORY!

1

2

3

4

5
