

## STATE HOUSE BASICS: GIVING TESTIMONY ON INFANT-TODDLER ISSUES

One way you can continue your efforts to **Be a Voice for Babies** is to offer testimony before state legislative committees, legislative study committees and at public hearings on state regulations. When legislation or regulations are proposed in your state which relate to your area of expertise, you can testify before the individuals making the decisions. Testimony can be given orally, in writing or both.

To help you prepare, we have compiled a list of tips for how to make your testimony a success.

- **Find out about hearings** for proposed legislation and regulations by staying in contact with individuals in the state who follow these activities closely. Check your state legislature's web site to see if you can get email alerts about hearings on bills you are tracking.
- If you are a member of an infant-toddler or children's coalition, talk with your colleagues about the type of information needed to address the legislation or regulations being heard. **Offer to testify** as a member of their group or as an individual with professional expertise in the issues being addressed.
- Talk with others who have previously testified in your state to **find out the logistics** of the testimony, including time limits, format for the written testimony, etc.
- **Be cognizant of how you are communicating about infant-toddler development.** Remember, policymakers are not likely to be well-versed in the language of early childhood development. Avoid speaking "in code" as much as possible.
- Find out how many people are on the committee before which you will be testifying. **Prepare your testimony in writing** and make enough copies for each member of the committee.
- **Sign-in** when you arrive at the hearing. This will ensure that the committee members know you are there to give testimony, and your name and affiliation will be put into the record.
- When giving testimony, **be concise and to the point.** Often, there are many people offering testimony, so you should address issues about which you are most expert and about which you have an important perspective.
- Let the committee members know that you are available at any time to answer their questions and **be a resource** to them.