



Advocates for Children of New York
Protecting every child's right to learn since 1971

How to Testify at the City Council Education Budget Hearing

The public hearing on the Mayor's education budget proposal (Fiscal Year 2024 Preliminary Budget - Education) will be held on **March 15th**. It's important for parents, students, educators, and advocates to make your voice heard in person or over Zoom!

- The hearing will start at **9:00 am**. The Department of Education will testify first.
- Public testimony is scheduled to start at **2:00 pm**. The hearing will run until everyone who wants to testify has had the opportunity to do so, which could be late into the afternoon or evening.
- You can testify in person in Council Chambers in City Hall or via Zoom.
- Unfortunately, there is no way to know the exact time you will actually be called on to testify. You will need to sit in Council Chambers or on Zoom until your turn comes (though you can do other things while you wait, just keep one eye on the hearing so you don't accidentally miss your turn!).
- You will likely only have **two minutes** to testify. This time goes very quickly, and Council staff may cut you off if you go over by more than a few seconds, so be sure to practice reading your testimony out loud ahead of time. Reading your testimony out loud often takes longer than when you practice silently by reading your testimony to yourself.
- You can testify about any topic you would like related to the education budget.
- If you are testifying via Zoom and don't already have a Zoom account, you can make one for free at <https://zoom.us/signup>.

Signing up

You should sign up in advance to testify whether you are testifying in person or over Zoom to help the Council plan and ensure you receive a Zoom link. However, you can testify in person whether or not you sign up in advance. To sign up, go to <https://council.nyc.gov/testify/> and follow the instructions.

- Where it says "Select a hearing," choose Wed, Mar 15 @ 9:00 AM – Committee on Education from the drop down. In the "subject of testimony" field, write a quick description of what your testimony is about. It's fine to use a general description such as "education budget" or a more specific description such as "preschool special education" or "students in foster care" or "mental health support."
- If you are testifying as an individual (you are a parent or a student sharing your personal story), leave the "organization" drop-down set to "self" (this is the default).

- If you are testifying on behalf of an organization, change the “organization” drop-down to “other” and add the name of your organization or agency.
- Written testimony can be submitted up to 72 hours after the end of the hearing, so you don’t have to upload a file at the same time as you sign up. You may want to sign up to testify now even before you write your testimony. You will have the option of submitting written testimony later, though you do not need to submit written testimony in order to testify.
- Be sure to click the blue “send” button at the bottom of the page to complete the sign-up process. After you click “send,” the bottom of the website will state “Thank you! Your information was received.”
- **If you or someone you are registering needs interpretation in order to testify** (for example, you want to testify in Spanish), email translationservice@council.nyc.gov at least three business days before the hearing to request an interpreter. Include the name and date of the hearing, as well as your name, phone number, and email address.
- **For questions about accessibility or to request additional accommodations**, email EEOOfficer@council.nyc.gov or call (212) 788-6936 at least three business days before the hearing. Include the name and date of the hearing, as well as your name, phone number, and email address.

Testifying

- If you are testifying via Zoom, you will get an email from the Council the day of the hearing (or possibly before) with the Zoom link. If you don’t see it, check your spam or junk mail folder. You may join any time after the hearing starts at 9:00 am and should try to join by 2:00 pm, when public testimony is scheduled to begin, if possible so the Council knows you are there and ready to go. Your name will be called when it is your turn.
- If you are testifying in person, you may arrive for the start of the hearing at 9:00 am or any time after the hearing starts and should try to arrive by 2:00 pm, when public testimony is scheduled to begin, if possible so the Council knows you are there and ready to go. Your name will be called when it is your turn. If you are testifying in person, you must sign up with the sergeant-in-arms when you arrive even if you signed up online in advance. The sergeant-in-arms will be sitting at a desk in the front righthand corner of Council Chambers and will provide you with a slip of paper to return; you only need to include your name and organization (if applicable).
- If you are testifying in person, the Council would appreciate if you could bring twenty copies double-sided of your written testimony – if you would like to submit written testimony. You will hand your copies of the testimony to the sergeant-in-arms when you are called to testify.
- Council staff will group everyone who wants to testify into panels (usually around 4-5 people per panel), and call people up in those groups. Some panels will be on Zoom and other panels will be in person.
- After each panel finishes, Council staff will call the names of the 4-5 people on the next panel. Each person on the panel will likely have two minutes to speak and will see a two-minute countdown clock on the screen or in the room. When the first person on the panel finishes speaking, the second person on the panel will have two minutes to speak, and so on.

- If you are testifying via Zoom, when it is your turn, you'll get a message telling you that you may unmute so you can be heard.
- Feel free to read your statement; there is no need to memorize it!
- After everyone on the panel has spoken, Council Members have a chance to ask questions of anyone on that panel. However, because of the number of people testifying, the Council likely will not ask questions of most speakers. Council staff will then call the next panel.
- While speaking at the hearing has the most impact, you may also want to submit your written statement by uploading it at <https://council.nyc.gov/testify/> or e-mailing it to testimony@council.nyc.gov. If you would like, you can submit a longer statement than what you're able to read out loud in two minutes. You can submit your written testimony up to 72 hours after the end of the hearing. You do not need to submit written testimony in order to testify, and you can submit written testimony even if you do not testify at the hearing.

Thank you very much for testifying!