

# Policy Toolkit

A guide to climate policy



**The  
Climate  
Initiative**

Guide to Participating  
in Public Hearings

# Introduction

Hello!

My name is Javan Santos and I am the Policy Manager for The Climate Initiative. Through these policy toolkits, I hope to show youth that policy can be simple and accessible for young people who are passionate about making change in their community. I started writing policy when I was in high school and have worked in policy for almost seven years now. The experience and knowledge from those years are poured into these toolkits for youth to use to make a difference in climate advocacy. Whether you are hoping to analyze policy, talk to a policymaker, or learn about what it takes to turn an idea into a law, I hope that you will learn something helpful in the resources these toolkits provide.

After you learn the fundamentals of navigating policy, this toolkit also comes with a run down of several different state-specific policy tools. In it, you'll find a history of climate policy in your state, legislators that are supportive of climate policy according to organizations within your state, and other useful information. Climate advocacy is not easy, and there is so much at stake for youth if nothing is done. My hope is that these toolkits will provide you all you need to make much needed change in your state and your community!

If you have any questions or thoughts on how we at The Climate Initiative can help your advocacy, please feel free to reach out to me at:  
[javan@theclimateinitiative.org](mailto:javan@theclimateinitiative.org)

*Javan*

Javan Santos  
Policy Manager



# Guide to Participating in Public Hearings

One of the best ways for youth climate advocates to address climate change is to use their voices! Not all youth are old enough to vote, but no matter your age, you are allowed to participate in public hearings on policies that the government is discussing. By participating, you are telling the government exactly how you hope they will run and why the policy is important to you. Go to your state or local government's website for information on when and where public hearings are held, and follow the tips below!

## Tips for Participating

### Know the policy!

Learn about the policy that is being discussed and what exactly it will do. Finding articles or press releases on the policy will help you understand what it does, why people support it, and if there's opposition against it. Learning what the policy means will help you form your own stance on the issue, and that will help you decide whether to participate in the public hearing or not.

### Know the rules

Each state legislature has its own unique standing rules that might impact the way that you participate in public hearings. For example, some states allow you to testify on a first come, first serve basis. However, in Maine, supporting and opposing testimony must be alternated, which means people who sign up first might not be the first ones to testify. There may be time limits, written submittal, or other requirements to participate in a public hearing. Make sure you communicate with the legislator's office if you are confused and they will help you out.

## Keep your testimony concise and on topic

Legislators attend several public hearings a day for weeks at a time. Making sure that you don't have tangents and that your testimony is short but persuasive is important to ensuring your voice is heard.

## Relate the policy to real life

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## Use data and storytelling appropriately

Making your testimony data-driven can provide new information that elected officials did not consider. However, too much data can seem clinical and bog down the public hearing with information. Crafting a narrative that can pull at the heart strings can also be very persuasive to elected officials! However, focusing too much on storytelling could pull focus from the technicalities of the legislation. Deciding whether to lean more on data, story, or a mixture of the two helps to guide you as you work on your public hearing testimony.

## Be yourself!

Part of deciding what type of testimony you make is understanding how you feel you'd be the most confident and persuasive and leaning on that in your testimony. No one likes listening to someone who is not being genuine or who does not believe what they're saying. Lean on your strengths and use them in your testimony!

Participating in a public hearing can be daunting, especially if you are a younger person testifying in front of a lot of adults.

However, supporting the youth is an almost universally agreed upon issue by all legislators. It is in their political interest to support and encourage you to be an active participant in the legislative process. Many legislators will applaud you for getting involved, so there is no need to be intimidated by them. They are public servants, working to serve you, so tell them what you want them to do!



# Policy Toolkit Survey

Thank you for taking the time to download and utilize one, or all, of our TCI Policy Toolkits!

To ensure that these Policy Toolkits are meeting your needs, please leave any and all feedback that you can to help improve our toolkit offering.

Please take a few minutes to complete a quick survey. You will be entered into our monthly eco-merch giveaway while completing the survey!



[Click here to take the survey.](#)

**Thank you!**



**Stories  
of Change**



**The Climate  
Initiative**

**Write it. Speak it. Show it.**

## **Share your climate policy projects \*for\* the world.**

**Your story of change will inspire other youth to take  
meaningful climate action.**

In connection with TCI programs, tools, and events,  
Stories of Change are shaping the way youth and  
communities across the nation and beyond are taking  
action on climate change.

We want to hear how utilizing our Toolkits has impacted  
your climate journey. Your story can encourage other  
youth to take action.

[Click HERE for more information and to submit your  
Story of Change!](#)