

Personal Testimony Sample



This is a sample personal testimony about a proposal for a new downtown movie theater whose developers are applying for community development funds. The audience are city officials at a city council meeting. It comes from RTC:Rural's *How-To Guide: Creating Personal Testimony to Influence Policy Change*.

For more information on giving personal testimony, check out RTC:Rural's Advocacy Skill Building Toolkit at rtc.ruralinstitute.umt.edu/resources.

Hello. My name is Anyperson Jones. I want to speak about the proposal that will use community development funds to build a theater downtown this year. While I like the idea of having a centrally located theater, I am concerned about this project because the plans do not include a good description of how the theater will be universally accessible to all members of the community. Given that the developers are applying for community funding for this project, I think it's important that the theater be universally accessible.

I use a wheelchair and I enjoy going to the movies with my friends. In the past this hasn't been easy because the theaters we currently have in town only have one or two places in the auditoriums where a wheelchair can fit and their aisles are very narrow. There have been times when I have been unable to see films because all the accessible spaces in the theater were occupied and I was told that I was not allowed to use the aisle because my chair presented a fire hazard. As a result, I often don't go to films with friends which isolates me from my community.

This proposed theater offers our community an opportunity to increase accessibility to all community members but universal design is something that needs careful and thoughtful planning in advance. Modifying inaccessible structures after they are built is not cost effective and rarely results in universally accessible spaces. Universal accessibility won't just benefit wheelchair users, like me, but will also benefit families and groups who want to invite people who use mobility devices to see films.

I would like to suggest that an accessibility workgroup be established to review plans for the new theater and all future projects seeking public funding. This will help ensure public funds are used for the benefit of every community member rather than excluding some individuals because of oversights in design and planning.