

# Community Witnesses in Energy Litigation

## Roles, Responsibilities and Expectations

This resource is designed for community experts and organizations who want to engage meaningfully in energy and utility proceedings without taking on the full burden of formal legal intervention. Serving as a community witness is a strategic middle path between submitting public comments and becoming a party to litigation.

This guide provides a concise, high-level overview of the roles, responsibilities, and expectations for community witnesses participating alongside EDF in litigation or regulatory proceedings.

### What is a Community Witness?

A community witness is an individual affiliated with, or representing, a community-based organization who provides written (and sometimes oral) testimony in a legal or regulatory energy proceeding. Community witnesses help ensure that lived experiences, community priorities, and on-the-ground impacts are part of the official evidentiary record. This role centers community voices, respects organizational capacity, and allows participation that is value-aligned.

A community witness' testimony focuses on issues related to energy issues where they live, often related to choices and plans under discussion by utilities and regulators. These include:

- Equity, affordability, access, air quality, climate, and public health concerns experienced by the witness and their community
- Alignment (or misalignment) between utility proposals and community needs
- Values, priorities, and impacts important to communities that may be at odds with utilities or regulators' choices.

Community witnesses do not need to be technical experts. Their authority comes from their own experience and observations, trust, and accountability to their community.

### Community Witness Testimony is Meaningful Participation

Providing testimony allows community experts to participate in energy proceedings in a way that carries formal weight. Unlike public comments, testimony is treated as evidence and becomes part of the official record that decision-makers must consider. It allows community voices to shape how issues are framed, evaluated, and ultimately decided.

Testimony also offers a way to influence outcomes without assuming the time, cost, or legal obligations associated with full intervention. Participation is structured, bounded, and capacity-aware, making it especially valuable for organizations that want more impact than a comment allows, have limited staff or legal resources, or prefer issue-specific engagement rather than involvement in an entire case.

### Core Principles of Community Witness Participation

- **Community Priorities Come First**  
Community priorities always take precedence over broader litigation strategy. Community witnesses testify only to issues that are aligned with their organization's mission, values,

and beliefs, and that are directly relevant to the communities they serve. Testimony should never require compromising organizational messaging or values.

- **Authentic Voice Is a Powerful Instrument**

The purpose of community testimony is not to replicate legal or technical arguments, but to elevate lived experience, name real-world impacts, and bring real human faces, context, and accountability to affected communities into the proceeding.

- **Defined Scope and Support**

Community witnesses participate within a clearly defined scope. Support is provided as needed to help identify appropriate topics, understand procedural expectations, and draft and file testimony. Community witnesses are not expected to navigate litigation on their own.

### Responsibilities of a Community Witness

Community witnesses are responsible for testifying in good faith on issues relevant to their life, and expertise.

- Testimony should clearly state whom the witness represents and why the issue matters to their community. Statements should be honest, accurate, and authentic, and grounded in lived experience. When citing facts, studies, or reports, sources should be included when possible. It is acceptable to explain real impacts communities are experiencing even when backup data is limited.
- Community witnesses are expected to meet agreed-upon drafting and filing deadlines, and to communicate early if capacity or timing becomes an issue.
- Witnesses should understand that testimony, once submitted, becomes part of a public legal record and may be referenced, summarized, or quoted by others.

### What Community Witnesses Are Not Responsible For

Community witnesses' role is intentionally limited and protective of community capacity. Community witnesses are *not* expected to:

- Serve as technical, engineering, or economic experts
- Align their testimony with every litigation position taken by parties
- Take on legal risk beyond their testimony

Community witnesses may receive support with scoping testimony topics, translating lived experience into effective written testimony, understanding procedural rules and expectations, and drafting, editing, and filing testimony. Support also helps ensure that community testimony complements legal or technical strategy. The goal is to make participation accessible, respectful, and empowering.

### How EDF Works with Community Witnesses

EDF engages community witnesses as values-aligned, issue-specific contributors whose testimony strengthens the evidentiary record by grounding legal and policy arguments in lived experience. Community witnesses are typically brought in when EDF is intervening or actively participating in an energy proceeding and seeks to ensure that impacts affecting communities, equity concerns, and real-world consequences are clearly before decision makers.

EDF does not ask community witnesses to defend broader litigation strategy or positions outside their mission. The goal is to strengthen clean, affordable, and equitable energy outcomes by ensuring that decisionmakers do not ignore community realities.

### **Examples of Community Witness Testimony**

The [Community Voices in Energy](#) website hosts examples of community witness testimony that illustrate how lived experience and organizational priorities translate into effective filings. These examples show how testimony can be clear, value-driven, and grounded in community experience.

- Energy Affordability & Bill Impacts
  - [Community Witness Testimony on Affordability](#)
- Disconnections & Energy Insecurity
  - [Community Witness Testimony on Reliability](#)
- Gas System Planning & Community Harm
  - [Community Witness Testimony on Gas Planning](#)
- Equity, Health, & Environmental Burdens
  - [Community Witness Testimony on Public Health Impacts](#)

### **Interested in Participating?**

If you or your organization are interested in serving as a community witness, please reach out. Participation can be tailored to your capacity and structured to be issue-specific and time-limited to meet your needs. Your voice, experience, goals, and priorities will guide the process.

**The bottom line: Community testimony is about making your voice count where it matters most.**