



FAMM ADVOCACY TOOLKIT

HOW TO SUBMIT STAKEHOLDER FEEDBACK

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GLOSSARY OF TERMS

STAKEHOLDER: Any individual, group, organization, or entity that is interested in their input being considered by a decisionmaker or decisionmakers. ***YOU ARE A STAKEHOLDER!***

FEEDBACK: Providing decisionmakers with thoughts and input about an issue.

TARGET: The lawmaker(s)/decisionmaker(s) you are hoping to inform and persuade by submitting stakeholder feedback.

LAWMAKER: An individual responsible for representing the interests of a specific geographical area (district) in the legislature.

DECISIONMAKER: An individual in a position to make decisions on specific issues that impact our communities.

JURISDICTION: The geographical area (district) a lawmaker represents, or scope of influence a decisionmaker possesses (*e.g. District 1 (Philadelphia, PA) or federal sentencing guidelines*).

EXECUTIVE: The highest ranking and often final decisionmaker in a governmental body (*e.g., mayor or president*).

LEGISLATIVE CHAMBER: The entirety of one legislative body that generally meets and votes independently of the other. Legislatures most often have two (bicameral) legislative chambers that share lawmaking responsibilities. (*e.g., U.S. House of Representatives or U.S. Senate, NJ Assembly and NJ Senate*)

LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEE: A smaller group of lawmakers who meet to consider and vote on legislation prior to it moving to the full legislative chamber. (*e.g., U.S. Senate Committee on the Judiciary or MD Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee*)

GENERAL ASSEMBLY: All members of a respective legislature. (*e.g., U.S. Congress or PA General Assembly*)

GOVERNMENT AGENCY: Non-legislative governmental entity (*e.g., Federal Bureau of Prisons or TN Department of Correction*)

GOVERNMENT COMMISSION: A non-legislative governmental body often responsible for drafting guidelines and regulations, and producing reports, research, and recommendations to inform and guide decisionmakers. (*e.g., U.S. Sentencing Commission or PA Commission on Sentencing*)

HOW TO SUBMIT STAKEHOLDER FEEDBACK

YOUR FEEDBACK MATTERS!

Every single one of us is a stakeholder in the laws and policies enacted by our government. You do not need to work for an organization or have a large platform in order to make your voice heard! As individuals who care about how people are sentenced and treated while incarcerated, your feedback matters on these issues.

YOUR INPUT IS VALUABLE AND DESERVES TO BE CONSIDERED!

There are a few things to consider as you begin to draft your stakeholder feedback:

TARGET	SUBMISSION GUIDELINES	ASK	ARGUMENT	FORMAT
Who should receive your feedback?	How do you submit your feedback? Are there due dates or guidelines?	What are you asking for?	What are you trying to convey with your feedback?	How should you format your feedback?

Tip: Stakeholder feedback is often made publicly available, so please do not include information you would not like shared with the general public!

DETERMINE THE TARGET FOR YOUR STAKEHOLDER FEEDBACK

To maximize the impact of your stakeholder feedback, you'll need to determine the appropriate target to receive your input.

Are you providing feedback on a bill as it moves through the legislative process? Are you submitting feedback about a government agency proposal during a public comment period? Are you trying to ask an executive branch official to take action based on your stakeholder feedback?

Knowing where your issue is in the process and who the decision-makers are is key in determining the most appropriate recipient for your stakeholder feedback!

LEGISLATIVE	EXECUTIVE	AGENCY/ COMMISSION
Lawmaker(s) Legislative Committee Full Chamber General Assembly	Executive Branch Official Governor President Mayor	Government Agency Government Commission

LEGISLATIVE TARGETS

To submit stakeholder feedback to the legislature, you'll first want to determine where your chosen bill is in the legislative process. Bills often begin as co-sponsorship memos, where the lawmakers championing an issue seek out support from their colleagues. Then bill language is introduced, given a bill number, and referred to a legislative committee. If the bill gets voted out of Committee, it goes to the full legislative chamber. If a bill passes one legislative chamber, it begins the process all over again in the opposite chamber.

To maximize the impact of your stakeholder feedback, you'll want to submit your feedback to the individual or legislative body that is preparing to consider or take action on your bill of interest.

- If a bill is in the initial introduction/co-sponsorship memo stage, submit your stakeholder feedback to the lawmaker who represents your community as well as the entire membership of the appropriate legislative chamber.
- If a bill has language introduced and has been referred to a legislative committee, submit your stakeholder feedback to the entire committee membership.
- If a bill has been voted out of committee and is being considered by the full legislative chamber, submit your stakeholder feedback to each member of that chamber.

Submit your stakeholder feedback to the appropriate legislative targets at each stage of a bill, and be sure to track any amendments that might be introduced, considered, and added to the bill to ensure your feedback is as accurate and relevant as possible.

Tip: You'll want to ensure you provide your stakeholder feedback to the lawmaker whose district covers where you live. As a constituent, your input will bear the greatest weight with the lawmaker who represents your geographical area. Find your lawmaker at famm.org/get-involved/contact-lawmakers.

Tip: Legislative committee membership information is available on the legislature's website. If you're able, include relevant legislative staff as recipients when you provide stakeholder feedback to lawmakers!

EXECUTIVE TARGETS

Submitting stakeholder feedback to executive targets is most effective when a bill or proposal has passed and is awaiting final action by the executive (i.e., president, governor, mayor), or when you are attempting to contact an executive office(r) (i.e. Attorney General, Secretary of Veterans Affairs, U.S. Pardon Attorney) to educate them or ask them to take action on an issue.

Be sure to determine the appropriate executive or executive office(r) to receive your feedback, since decision-makers only have real power to act on issues under their jurisdiction.

Tip: Executives can vary by municipality and jurisdiction, so be sure to familiarize yourself with the roles and responsibilities of each executive you're contacting.

Tip: The official contact information for officeholders and staff can change frequently, so be sure to locate the most updated information!

AGENCY/COMMISSION TARGETS

Submitting stakeholder feedback to agency or commission targets (i.e. U.S. Sentencing Commission, Department of Corrections) is often most effective when there is a public comment period on a proposal, when trying to educate an agency or commission about an issue, or asking them to take action on an issue. Agencies and commissions often consider changes to guidelines, policies, and procedures instead of legislation.

Tip: Public comment periods are usually time-sensitive, so be sure to check due dates for submitting your stakeholder feedback!

Tip: Agencies and commissions offer varying options for submitting stakeholder feedback, so be sure to familiarize yourself with how your intended target prefers to receive feedback.

CONFIRMING SUBMISSION GUIDELINES

When you are looking to submit stakeholder feedback, be sure to identify any relevant submission guidelines to help you determine the preferred format, recipient, and timing for your feedback. Stakeholder feedback is often accepted in *one* format, submitted *one* way, and during a *limited* period of time, so be sure to clearly identify those guidelines prior to drafting your feedback.

Sometimes, stakeholder feedback is accepted orally as well as in writing. Oral testimony is often time-limited, so include your primary points in oral testimony and also submit supplemental written feedback with greater detail.

When your feedback is finalized, submit it in the appropriate format, to the correct recipient, and within the allocated timeframe to ensure it is included and considered!

Tip: If you need assistance facilitating the submission of your stakeholder feedback or determining any relevant submission guidelines, please feel free to reach out to FAMM at advocacy@famm.org!

STATING YOUR ASK AND SUPPORTING YOUR ARGUMENT

STATING YOUR ASK

When drafting stakeholder feedback, be extremely clear about your ask of the target decisionmaker(s). Are you asking them to veto a bill that has passed out of the legislature? Consider your input on a proposed regulatory change? Support a piece of legislation in a Committee? Something else? Ensure that your ask is clearly stated and well supported by your argument, and that your requested action is within the scope of your target's authority.

*Tip: State your specific ask toward the beginning of your stakeholder feedback, and **restate** your ask during your closing!*

Tip: Be courteous and respectful in your ask of the decisionmaker, and thank them for considering your input!

SUPPORTING YOUR ARGUMENT

When composing stakeholder feedback, be sure to make a clear argument about why the decisionmaker(s) should consider your ask, and utilize reliable sources for any supporting evidence. Your argument should be relevant to the issue at hand, concise, and convincing. Think of your argument as a way to persuade your audience of the validity and importance of your specific ask.

Your unique personal experience and viewpoint are extremely valuable and your stakeholder feedback adds much-needed context in public policy discussions among key decisionmakers.

Tip: Use citations from reputable sources to support your arguments and allow the recipient of your feedback to conduct further research on the topic, should they want more information.

Tip: Refrain from using your stakeholder feedback to focus on the specifics of an individual case, and instead utilize the opportunity to lend your valuable voice and experience to the narrative!

FORMATTING YOUR STAKEHOLDER FEEDBACK

Stakeholder feedback should be appropriately formatted for the intended target, their preferred method of receiving feedback, and to highlight your specific ask. There is often a specific period of time and a deadline associated with submitting stakeholder feedback, so be sure to confirm any guidance on appropriate timelines for feedback submission.

Stakeholder feedback can be drafted and submitted in a variety of formats, but each format provides an opportunity for stakeholders to share why they care about an issue and to ask for a specific action. The appropriate format for your feedback depends on your intended target, where an issue is in the process, and what type of feedback is being sought from stakeholders.

Tip: Always address your stakeholder feedback to the official contact information provided - never their personal contact information.

Tip: When drafting your stakeholder feedback, avoid relitigating a case and instead focus on the issue you're advocating.

TESTIMONY	LETTER	PUBLIC COMMENT
Legislative Committee Full Chamber General Assembly Your Lawmaker	Executive Branch Official Governor President Your Lawmaker	Government Agency Commissions

TESTIMONY

Testimony can be submitted in written form online and through the mail, and sometimes can be offered verbally in person or online. Testimony should be addressed to the legislative body or individual you are attempting to educate, reference the bill number or issue you're advocating, and include a concrete ask. Be sure to include your contact information in your written testimony, should anyone want to follow up with you about your stakeholder feedback.

Verbal testimony is often time-limited, so be sure to confirm any rules if drafting testimony that will be given verbally, either in person or online. Remember that you can also submit written testimony along with your verbal testimony, so be sure to highlight the most impactful aspects of your argument or story during your time providing testimony.

Written and verbal testimony is not an appropriate space to relitigate a case, but an opportunity to lend your voice and personal story to an issue that is being considered.

Be sure to thank the leadership of the legislative body you are addressing individually, and thank the rank-and-file members as a group in your testimony. Always include your contact information, should anyone want to follow up about your feedback!

Tip: Include relevant legislative staff as recipients when you submit your stakeholder feedback. Staff play a critical role in our government!

Tip: If you include statistics or references, be sure to include footnotes or endnotes in your written testimony!

WRITTEN TESTIMONY EXAMPLE

Written Testimony of Jane Smith

In Support of HB 123

FAMMlandia House Judiciary Committee

June 22, 2025

I would like to thank Chair Jones, Minority Chair Johnson, and each Committee member for the opportunity to submit written testimony in support of HB 123, a bill that would provide oversight of prisons across FAMMlandia.

I strongly support HB 123, and ask the Committee to vote favorably on this necessary piece of legislation.

As a current resident of FAMM county living at FAMMland Correctional Facility, I experience first-hand the overwhelming need for independent oversight of FAMMlandia's prisons. The people living and working in FAMMlandia's prison communities deserve fair and humane treatment, but the current systems and procedures meant to ensure these things lacks efficiency and permits substandard quality of care for its residents and employees. In the 28 years I have been a part of the community living in various prisons across FAMMlandia, I have witnessed countless instances of gross negligence and abuse by correctional staff, as well as blatantly unsafe and prolonged unsanitary living conditions for incarcerated people.

People are afraid to file grievances using the existing procedures due to fear of retaliation by staff members or other community members, and I have also seen corrections staff afraid to make complaints about other staff members out of worry for their job security. My family members living in the suburbs of FAMM county have also filed numerous valid grievances over the decades on my behalf, and have never received more than a cursory automatic response from FAMMlandia's prison administration.

It is painfully evident that something must change in order to provide legitimate and unbiased avenues for incarcerated people, their loved ones, and corrections staff to file grievances when concerns arise without fear of retaliation or being ignored. FAMMlandia's prison administration and staff should not be responsible for handling the legitimate grievances of their colleagues and incarcerated residents, as it gives the appearance of impropriety and has proven to be an ineffective method of oversight.

The independent oversight of FAMMlandia's prisons established in HB 123 will go a long way in providing a more fair, discrete, and thorough process to handle grievances, and work toward ensuring that FAMMlandia's correctional facilities are run with integrity and care for the people who live, work, and visit. I encourage the Committee to move this critical piece of legislation forward, and to spend time inside FAMMlandia's correctional facilities with people directly impacted by this effort.

Thank you for taking the time to consider my feedback on HB 123. Please do not hesitate to reach out with any questions or follow-up to Jane Smith, GX0923H, FAMMland Correctional Facility, FAMM county, FAMMlandia, 11111.

LETTER

When the goal of your stakeholder feedback is to address and educate a decisionmaker (i.e. President, Governor), you might want to consider formatting your stakeholder feedback into a letter addressed to that individual. A letter might be most appropriate when a bill or proposal has passed and is awaiting action by the final decision-maker.

You might also consider a letter format when a bill or proposal is in its earliest stages and you'd like to provide your lawmaker or a relevant decision-maker with your stakeholder feedback before any official language is drafted and submitted.

Tip: Include your contact information in the letter to help facilitate any follow-up the decision-maker might have about your feedback.

Tip: Thank the decision-maker for taking the time to consider your feedback!

LETTER EXAMPLE

Jane Smith (GX0923H)
FAMMland Correctional Facility
FAMM County, FAMMlandia, 11111

June 22, 2025

Governor Mary McLaughlin
1111 Capitol Circle
FAMM City, FAMMlandia, 11111

Honorable Governor McLaughlin,

I am writing today to encourage you to sign HB 123 into law, which will create independent oversight of FAMMlandia's prisons. So many of us who spend time in FAMMlandia's prisons - residents, staff, and visitors - submitted stakeholder feedback throughout the process of HB 123, from cosponsorship memo circulation through its final passage by FAMMlandia's General Assembly. Establishing independent prison oversight of FAMMlandia's prisons is critically important to a broad SWARTH of stakeholders, and it gives us great hope to know that the input of the people most directly impacted by this effort was considered in each step of the process.

As a current resident of FAMM county living at FAMMland Correctional Facility, I experience first-hand the overwhelming need for independent oversight of FAMMlandia's prisons. The people living and working in FAMMlandia's prison communities deserve fair and humane treatment, but the current systems and procedures meant to ensure these things lacks efficiency and permits substandard quality of care for its residents and employees. In the 28 years I have been a part of the community living in various prisons across FAMMlandia, I have witnessed countless instances of gross negligence and abuse by correctional staff, as well as blatantly unsafe and prolonged unsanitary living conditions for incarcerated people.

By signing HB 123 into law, you have the opportunity to create a legitimate and unbiased avenue for incarcerated people, their loved ones, and corrections staff in FAMMlandia to file grievances when concerns arise without fear of retaliation or being ignored. Implementing the independent oversight of FAMMlandia's prisons established in HB 123 will go a long way in providing a more fair, discrete, and thorough process to handle grievances, and work toward ensuring that FAMMlandia's correctional facilities are run with integrity and care for the people who live, work, and visit.

Thank you for taking the time to consider my feedback on HB 123. Please do not hesitate to reach out with any questions or follow-up.

Respectfully,



Jane Smith

PUBLIC COMMENT

Oftentimes, government agencies and commissions solicit stakeholder feedback in the form of public comments. Public comments are often solicited when changes to regulations or guidelines are being considered, if there is a proposed facility closure or construction, and when an issue arises that necessitates public input.

Public comments are usually solicited during a specific period of time during the process of a proposal being considered, and can be submitted in writing. Oral public comment opportunities are also sometimes available during public meetings of government agencies, but are often time-limited, so be sure to submit written comments along with any comments given orally.

Tip: Be sure to check the dates for public comment periods to ensure your feedback is able to be submitted and considered!

Tip: Confirm the preferred public comment submission format of the agency or commission receiving your feedback!

PUBLIC COMMENT EXAMPLE

June 22, 2025

Honorable Jill Jackson
FAMMlandia Sentencing Commission, Chair
10101 Secondchance Avenue
FAMM City, FAMMlandia 11111

Chair Jackson,

My name is Jane Smith, and I am writing to provide feedback on the proposed amendments to FAMMlandia's sentencing guidelines that are currently being considered by the FAMMlandia Sentencing Commission. I have the distinct viewpoint of having 28 years of lived experience as an incarcerated person sentenced using guidelines established by this very Commission, and as a member of a community of people who have witnessed first-hand the rapid growth and aging of FAMMlandia's incarcerated population during that time. I want to thank the leadership and members of the FAMMlandia Sentencing Commission for inviting public comment on the proposed changes, and I hope the feedback provided by community members directly impacted by these proposals is considered with the weight it deserves.

I. Proposed Amendment 2 - Lowering Guideline Ranges for Long-Term Sentencing

The FAMMlandia Sentencing Commission is considering a proposal to lower the guideline ranges utilized to calculate appropriate sentences for criminal offenses requiring longer periods of incarceration. Evidence has long shown that long sentences of incarceration are not an effective method of deterrence and that people largely age out of behaviors that could be considered risky or criminal.¹ It also costs exponentially more to keep people incarcerated as they age due to the increased medical needs of an elderly population.²

In the decades I have lived as a part of an incarcerated community, I have seen countless people transform from young and irrational to mature and purposeful long before the expiration of their prison sentences. Many of these people, myself included, were sentenced to serve the remainder of our lives in prison for awful decisions we

¹ Five Things to Know about Deterrence, National Institute of Justice, June 5, 2016, <https://nij.ojp.gov/topics/articles/five-things-about-deterrence>

² The Impact of an Aging Inmate Population on the Federal Bureau of Prisons, Office of the Inspector General, U.S. Department of Justice, February, 2016, <https://oig.justice.gov/sites/default/files/reports/15-05.pdf>

PUBLIC COMMENT EXAMPLE CONTINUED

made as young people. Those of us who have matured and rehabilitated would make powerful credible messengers, mentors, and violence interrupters in our communities, should we be allowed to return home. Lowering the guideline ranges for longer-term sentences aligns with evidence and allows fiscal resources to be diverted from supporting unnecessary incarceration and into violence prevention and community supports proven to reduce crime on the front end.

II. Proposed Amendment 5 - Increasing Guideline Ranges for Sentencing for Fentanyl Offenses

Also under consideration by the FAMMlandia Sentencing Commission is a proposal to increase sentencing guideline ranges for fentanyl related offenses. Increasing the severity of punishment and length of incarceration does not have a significant impact on reducing or deterring crime in our communities.³ It is understandable that people seek solutions to issues that become prevalent in our communities, but a wealth of evidence shows that increasing sentences is not a valid solution.⁴ In fact, increasing sentences for people convicted of fentanyl-related offenses earmarks precious taxpayer resources for ineffective and excessive punishment instead of allocating them toward programs and resources to support long-term success for those struggling with substance use and abuse.

Over the last few decades, I have witnessed the direct impact of extreme drug sentencing policies on the size of FAMMlandia's incarcerated populations and seen the very real fiscal and human costs of lawmakers repeatedly responding to the latest harmful substance in our communities with outdated rhetoric and responses. Instead of extended incarceration, many people who find themselves facing drug convictions are in need of support, resources, and like so many of us - simply time to mature into adulthood. I encourage the FAMMlandia Sentencing Commission to commit to implementing evidence-based guidelines for sentencing people convicted of fentanyl-related offenses, and avoid falling back on outdated approaches.

³ Deterrence in the Twenty-First Century, Nagin, D, 2013,

<https://prohic.nl/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/2020-06-02-DeterrenceMetaNagin.2013.pdf>

⁴ Undoing the Damage of the War on Drugs: A Renewed Call for Sentencing Reform, The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights, June 17, 2021,

<https://civilrights.org/resource/undoing-the-damage-of-the-war-on-drugs-a-renewed-call-for-sentencing-reform-june-17-2021/#:~:text=Increasing%20the%20severity%20of%20punishment,and%20drug%20use%20or%20recidivism.>

PUBLIC COMMENT EXAMPLE CONTINUED

Thank you so much for considering my input. Please do not hesitate to contact me with any questions or follow up.

Respectfully,



Jane Smith (GX0923H)
FAMMland Correctional Facility
FAMM County, FAMMlandia, 11111

ADVOCACY IN ACTION

FAMM would love to see your advocacy in action!

Add advocacy@famm.org as a bcc if you submit your stakeholder feedback via email, or send a *physical copy of your submitted stakeholder feedback to FAMM at 1100 13th St NW, Suite 201, Washington, DC 20005.*

Let FAMM know at advocacy@famm.org if you submit stakeholder feedback through an online portal, and if you register to provide verbal testimony - email us a link to watch you speak!

If you are interested in having your stakeholder feedback shared publicly so others can be inspired by your advocacy, let FAMM know! *FAMM will not include your stakeholder feedback in our public-facing communications without your consent.*

STAY CONNECTED WITH FAMM!

FAMM would love to keep you and your loved ones in the loop with the most up-to-date opportunities to advocate, resources to stay informed, and events to build community! FAMM has a long-standing and supportive community of people with incarcerated loved ones and people who have returned home after experiencing incarceration.

Text JOIN to 40419, email famm@famm.org, write to 1100 13th St. NW, Suite 201, Washington, D.C., 20005, or scan the QR code to join FAMM!



Interested in receiving updates from FAMM while incarcerated? Sign up to receive our “FAMM Gram” by sending your name, prison ID number, facility name and address to FAMM at 1100 13th St. NW, Suite 201, Washington, DC, 20005 or email famm@famm.org!

1100 13th St NW, Suite 201 • Washington, DC 20005 (202) 822-6700 www.famm.org

FAMM

QUESTIONS?

If you have further questions about submitting stakeholder feedback, or need assistance facilitating the submission of your feedback to the appropriate target, please contact FAMM!

advocacy@famm.org

1100 13th St. NW, Suite 201, Washington, D.C., 20005 (Attn: Advocacy)

202.822.6700

