

MARYLAND SENATE JUDICIAL PROCEEDINGS COMMITTEE
2024 Witness Committee Guidelines

UPDATED February 1, 2024

I. Bill Hearings

- All bill hearings will take place in person in the applicable committee room and will be streamed live via the Maryland General Assembly (MGA) Website.
- Committees traditionally hear bills on Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays beginning at 1:00 p.m.
- All scheduled bill hearings will be posted in the MGA hearing schedule. Please check the schedule periodically for the most up-to-date information.
- The bill order will be posted in the MGA hearing schedule by 12:00 p.m. on the day of the scheduled bill hearings. The committee chair will also announce the bill order at the beginning of each bill hearing.
- **To register to provide oral testimony or submit written testimony, individuals MUST create an MGA account through the MGA website. [Click here for a tutorial.](#)**
 - Please note, the MGA website does not support internet explorer. Please use another web browser to upload your written testimony.
- Oral testimony sign-up and written testimony submission will open one (1) business day in advance of the scheduled bill hearing and will be open from 8:00 a.m. – 6:00 p.m.

Bill Hearing Timeline

	<u>Monday Hearing</u>	<u>Tuesday Hearing</u>	<u>Wednesday Hearing</u>	<u>Thursday Hearing</u>	<u>Friday Hearing</u>
Oral Witness Sign-up & Written Testimony Submission	Friday from 8AM - 6PM	Monday from 8AM - 6PM	Tuesday from 8AM - 6PM	Wednesday from 8AM - 6PM	Thursday from 8AM - 6PM

Oral Testimony

- Witnesses are strongly encouraged to provide in-person oral testimony. To include as many citizens as possible in the legislative process, *up to 14* members of the public may provide virtual oral testimony via Zoom per bill.
- *The committee may limit oral testimony* based on the number of bills being heard and the number of witnesses signed up to testify.
- For bills the committee heard and voted out unanimously during the 2023 Maryland General Assembly, the committee will hear oral testimony from the bill sponsor.
- For any other bills the committee heard during the 2023 Maryland General Assembly, the committee will hear from two proponents and two opponents.
- Witnesses must designate whether they will testify in person or by Zoom. Witnesses may not change their oral testimony designation (virtual or in-person) after the sign-up system closes, even if they are not selected for virtual testimony.
- Witness testimony via pre-recorded video will not be allowed.
- Late witness sign-up will not be allowed.
- Witness testimony will be timed. Witnesses will have two-minutes (2:00) to provide oral testimony. Except if a bill has over 30 witnesses. **If a bill has more than 30 witnesses, each witness will have one-minute to testify (1:00).**
- Witnesses who provide in-person oral testimony will be called to testify before witnesses providing testimony via Zoom. Any changes to this format will be at the discretion of the committee chair.
- Sponsors and witnesses who wish to share an audio-visual presentation with the committee are strongly encouraged to upload the presentation as written testimony. Requests to show an audio-visual presentation, must be made to the committee manager at least 24 hours in advance of the scheduled bill hearing. For witnesses, the audio-visual presentation must fit within the two-minute allotted oral testimony time. Witnesses providing testimony via Zoom will not be permitted to show an audio-visual presentation during their testimony.
- Typically, committee members will ask questions after the conclusion of a witness's testimony. However, any changes to this format are at the discretion of the committee chair.

Zoom Instructions

- Zoom links will ONLY be sent to witnesses selected to testify who chose "virtual oral" or "virtual both" when they signed up to testify on a bill.

- Zoom links will be sent from noreply@mlis.state.md.us by 12:00 p.m. on the day of the scheduled bill hearing.

If a witness is NOT selected to testify, the witness will receive an email from noreply@mlis.state.md.us to inform the witness they were not selected.

- **The Zoom link is confidential and should not be shared.**
- Witnesses must log into Zoom with their first and last names so committee staff are able to quickly identify the user and admit them into the meeting at the appropriate time. Witnesses who do not log into Zoom with their first and last name may miss their opportunity to testify.
- Zoom witnesses should follow the hearings via the MGA website to know when the bill they are testifying on is going to be called by the committee chair and should log into Zoom when the bill before their bill is called.
- When testifying, witnesses must have their camera on.
- After the committee chair indicates that there are no further questions, the witness should exit the Zoom meeting or they will be logged out by committee staff.

Written Testimony

- Any written testimony submitted to a committee is public testimony and therefore accessible to the public and cannot be removed.
- Written testimony MUST be in a PDF format to be uploaded.
- Late testimony will be accepted but will not be uploaded in advance of the bill hearing and will be marked as late. Please reach out to the committee manager on how to submit the testimony.

Accommodations

- For an Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requests, please contact the committee directly.
- For an MGA sign language interpretation request, please request sign language interpretation at least 5 – 7 businesses days in advance of the event by filling out the following form: [Request Sign Language Interpretation Form](#). The committee will attempt to arrange interpreters on shorter notice but cannot guarantee availability; interpreters are not generally available on an emergency or short-notice basis.

II. Voting

- The committee voting schedule is at the discretion of the committee chair and will depend on the workload of the committee.

- Voting sessions and voting lists will be available in the MGA hearing schedule 24 hours in advance of a voting session when feasible.
- All voting sessions will be live-streamed via the MGA Website.
- The outcome of a voting session will be published in the MGA hearing schedule within 24 hours after a voting session and on the bill page on the MGA website after the committee reports out.

Public Bill Files

- The public can request an electronic copy of a public bill file by emailing the committee manager for the committee that has been assigned the bill.
 - Witness testimony and the oral witness list will be available the day after the bill is heard in committee.
 - Any additional materials will be available after the bill passes third reader on the Senate floor.
- Written testimony will also be available through the MGA website when the bill is on the Senate floor for second reader. For bills that do not pass out of a committee, written testimony will be available on the website after the legislative session.
- For bill files that are not available on the MGA website, please contact the Department of Legislative Services Library at 410-946-5400.

III. General Policy and Procedures

- Late filed Senate bills will be sponsor only and may not be heard before crossover.
- House Bills:
 - In general, the committee does not hold hearings on House bills that have been cross-filed in the Senate.
 - Additionally, when the committee schedules a House Bill for a public hearing, the committee will accept oral testimony from the Bill's sponsor only UNLESS there is opposition. If there is opposition, the committee will hold a limited bill hearing.
- For questions, please contact the Committee Manager, Sandy Popp at 410.841.3623 or sandra.popp@mlis.state.md.us.