

House Judiciary Committee Witness Guidelines 2024 Session

All bill hearings will be held in-person with a virtual oral testimony option (via Zoom) and streamed live on YouTube. If you would like to provide oral testimony, in-person testimony is strongly encouraged.

You can view all hearings live via YouTube on the Maryland General Assembly (MGA) website home page here: <http://mgaleg.maryland.gov/mgawebsite/> or on the MGA hearing schedule here: <http://mgaleg.maryland.gov/mgawebsite/Meetings/Day/guidelines>

Oral testimony sign-up and written testimony (must be a PDF document) submission must be done using MyMGA on the [Maryland General Assembly website home page](#) (see icon on the upper right corner of home page). MyMGA works best on Chrome or Microsoft Edge browsers; for Apple devices the Safari browser is best. Other browsers may kick you out of the system.

If you choose to testify virtually, you MUST enter a valid email address that you can access, because this is how you will receive the Zoom link to get into the hearing to testify.




There is NO switching from in-person testimony to virtual testimony or vice-versa once the sign-up period has closed.

Oral testimony sign-up and written testimony submission is open two (2) business days before a scheduled hearing. Sign-up opens at 8:00 a.m. and closes 6:00 p.m. See chart below for sign-up guidance.

The MGA website homepage has video tutorials for **MyMGA** and testimony sign-up.

Bill sponsors are automatically signed up for oral in-person testimony on their own bill but bill sponsors must follow these same MyMGA procedures and timeframes to upload and submit their written testimony. **Bill sponsors:** select “written” (not “both”) when uploading and submitting your testimony during the appropriate sign-up day/time for your upcoming bill hearing.

The following chart details sign up and written testimony submission timing:

Hearing is on a 	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
You must sign-up to testify and/or submit written testimony On 	The previous Thursday from 8:00am-6:00pm	The previous Friday from 8:00am-6:00pm	The previous Monday from 8:00am-6:00pm	The previous Tuesday from 8:00am-6:00pm	The previous Wednesday from 8:00am-6:00pm
If a virtual witness, Zoom link emailed to you 	Previous Friday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday

The **bill order** will be updated and posted to MGA hearing schedule the day before the scheduled hearing.

Time limits for every bill being heard in the House Judiciary Committee during the 2023 Session: each bill sponsor will have three (3) minutes to deliver oral testimony and every subsequent witness (including those on the sponsor panel) will have two (2) minutes to deliver oral testimony. At the discretion of the Chair, the time limit may be reduced if there are a large number of witnesses. The Chair will announce any time limit reductions at the start of the bill hearing

Sponsor Panels: All bill sponsors are permitted to identify up to four additional witnesses to speak on their sponsor panel. These four additional sponsor panel witnesses may testify in-person and/or virtually. Per timing rules outlined above, the bill sponsor will receive three (3) minutes to deliver oral testimony and all other sponsor panel witnesses will receive two (2) minutes to deliver oral testimony.

There will be **no presentations/PowerPoints** offered by witnesses during House Judiciary Committee bill hearings. **This applies to bill sponsors and all in-person and virtual witnesses.** If you would like Committee members to have your presentation, you may upload it in MyMGA in PDF format along with your written testimony (members will be able to view the document during the hearing, on their laptops, along with all written testimony). You may also email the presentation in advance to Committee members.

IN-PERSON WITNESSES:

The screens in the main lobby outside of the hearing room display the bill order during each bill hearing. The bill order status is updated throughout each hearing and is reflective on the screens. The screens will also show the live hearing with closed captions. Witnesses are permitted to sit in the rows of chairs (the gallery) at the back of our Committee room until your name is called to testify. While in the committee: do not maintain conversations, keep your phones and electronic devices set to vibrate, and do not consume food. Water is permitted in the Committee room.

VIRTUAL WITNESSES:

- After you receive the email with the Zoom link for your hearing date: start the process of entering the Zoom hearing by clicking the link. At this point, you will be moved to the “waiting room” for the Zoom hearing. The host of the Zoom hearing will see your name in the “waiting room” and **your name must exactly match the name you used to sign up on MyMGA and must be your first and last name.**
 - How to make sure your name matches: once you are signed-in to your Zoom account, and prior to joining the hearing, go to your “Profile” and choose “Edit” next to your name and make sure your “Display name” matches the first and last name you used to sign-up for the hearing. Then join the hearing so the host will see the correct name in the waiting room to admit you.
- **Do not use your organization’s name or acronym when joining the Zoom hearing. The host will not admit you to the hearing if the name seen by the host does not match the first and last name used to sign-up.**
- **The name you use to sign-up with during the sign-up period is the only name that will be called and allowed to testify. If you change your/the name in a MyMGA account after the sign-up period has closed, that name will NOT be called to testify.**
- If your bill has many witnesses, you may not be admitted immediately at the beginning of your bill hearing as the host will admit witnesses in groups of approximately five (5) witnesses per panel.
- You cannot hear the Zoom hearing when you are in the Zoom waiting room. You may watch the hearing via the YouTube live-stream or MGA website (see above) while waiting for your bill.
- **You must close YouTube when you enter the Zoom hearing or there will be a disruptive feedback/echo sound.**
- **When you enter the hearing via Zoom, you must keep your camera OFF and remain muted until the Chair calls your name to begin delivering your testimony.**
- **When the Chair calls your name, please turn on your camera and unmute yourself and begin your testimony.**

- After Committee members concluded their questions for your panel, you will be removed from the Zoom hearing. Again, you can watch the hearing via YouTube or the MGA website. If you have another bill being heard in the Judiciary Committee on the same date but later in the day's agenda, please click the Zoom link in your email again to rejoin. You will be readmitted at the appropriate time to testify on your next bill.
- Requests for copies of written testimony after a bill is heard can be made by calling the Committee with the bill number, your name, phone number and email address. The testimony will then be emailed to you. After the Committee votes on a bill and it moves to second reader, the testimony can be found on the MGA website on the bill's history page under "Witness List." Testimony for bills not voted on can be found on the MGA website on each bill's history page after the full Session ends.

TESTIMONY STANDARDS:

- All submitted written testimony **must** have a:
 - Visible bill number located at the top of the first page of your testimony
 - Clear indication of support (FAV), opposed (UNF), or support with amendments (FWA)
 - Name and address of the person and/or entity testifying and submitting the testimony

CROSSOVER / RULES PROCEDURES:

- All identical crossover bills from the Senate will be presented to the Judiciary Committee as **sponsor-only**.
- All bills that are re-referred to the Judiciary Committee from the Rules Committee will be presented to the Judiciary Committee as **sponsor-only**.
- The Judiciary Committee will accept oral testimony on crossover or re-referred Rules Committee bills from the bill sponsor, a bill sponsor's designee, **or** the representative of the Department that originally requested the bill.
- For crossover or re-referred Rules Committee bills, the public may still submit written testimony via the MyMGA portal to indicate their position for the bill. See MyMGA and testimony standards procedures above.

CONTACT THE COMMITTEE:

- If you have any questions, please call the Committee at 410-841-3488