



THE SENATE OF MARYLAND
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

Standing Committees 2021 General Witness Guidelines

I. Bill Hearings and Briefings

- All Senate bill hearings and briefings will be held virtually via Zoom and streamed live on YouTube.
- During the first part of session, on days when the Senate floor does not meet, bill hearings generally will begin no earlier than 11:00 AM, as determined by the Chair of the Committee. On days when there are floor sessions, committees will schedule bill hearings based on the floor session schedule and number of bills assigned to the committee.
- All scheduled bill hearings will be posted in the Maryland General Assembly (MGA) hearing schedule along with the *Live* link to go directly to the meeting. Please check the schedule periodically for the most up to date information.
- The bill order will be posted in the MGA hearing schedule the morning of the scheduled bill hearing. The Chair of the committee hearing the bill will also announce the bill order at the beginning of each bill hearing and will update the audience on which bill will be called next at the start of the prior bills introduction.

Oral Testimony

- As stated in the COVID-19 Protocols for Session for the Senate, the number of witnesses to provide oral testimony on each bill will be limited. There will be up to four (4) witnesses in favor (proponents), two (2) favorable with amendments (FWA) witnesses, and four (4) witnesses in opposition.
 - **Proponents:** The bill sponsor will be able to select up to three (3) witnesses to testify on the Senator's bill. The sponsoring Senator will also be able to designate one of those witnesses as the "lead proponent." The fourth witness will be selected at random via the MGA witness sign up system. If the sponsoring Senator does not provide or designate any witnesses by 3:00 PM two days before the hearing date, those witness slots will be opened up to the public and all four (4) witnesses will be selected at random.

- **Favorable with Amendments:** One (1) witness will be randomly selected via the witness sign up system, and one (1) will be selected at the discretion of the Chair at least one day before the hearing.
- **Opponents:** Two (2) witnesses will be selected at random via the witness sign up system and two (2) will be reserved as organizational slots. The Chair will select the organizational slots from the witness sign up system to ensure that the organizations who most accurately reflect groups opposed are provided the opportunity to testify.
- All witnesses will have two-minutes and thirty seconds (2:30) to testify, with the exception of the “lead proponent” who will have five-minutes (5:00).
- All witnesses, **including sponsor witnesses**, must create a “My MGA” account through the MGA website and must sign up through the MGA website. [Please click here for instructions on how to create a My MGA.](#)
- Witness sign up will open two (2) business days in advance of a scheduled bill hearing and will be open from 10:00 am – 3:00 pm. Bill sponsors also need to submit a sponsor witness form to the committee hearing the bill by 3:00 pm to ensure their witnesses are selected to testify.
- Late witness sign up will not be allowed.
- The Chair of each committee has discretion to expand the number of witnesses who testify on a bill in consultation with the minority party’s ranking member of the committee for an *expanded hearing*. This will be an extremely rare occurrence, and if expanded, the number of witnesses on a bill will double. For favorable witnesses, the bill sponsor will be able to select up to four (4) witnesses and the other four (4) witnesses will be selected at random.
- All selected witnesses will be notified of their selection the night before the scheduled bill hearing, and will receive the Zoom log-in information at that time. **Witnesses cannot designate someone else to take their slot.**
- Audio visual presentations will only be allowed from the bill sponsor and must be provided at least 24 hours in advance of the hearing date.
- All witnesses will testify via Zoom with a link provided, and must have their cameras on for their testimony.

Written Testimony

- Any individual or organization that intends to provide written testimony, including sponsor witnesses, must create a “My MGA” account on the MGA website.
- Written testimony **must** be submitted two (2) business days in advance of a scheduled bill hearing and will be open from 10:00 am – 3:00 pm.
- Late testimony cannot be accepted.

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 & Written Testimony Sign up	Thursday from 10AM - 3PM	Friday from 10AM - 3PM	Monday from 10AM - 3PM	Tuesday from 10AM - 3PM	Wednesday from 10AM - 3PM
Witnesses from Sponsor	Thursday by 3PM	Friday by 3PM	Monday by 3PM	Tuesday by 3PM	Wednesday by 3PM
Signup Link Sent/Witnesses Finalized	Friday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday

PLEASE NOTE: These timelines are a goal for committees throughout Session. Timelines are subject to adjustment at times, and may need to be reevaluated after crossover, and as Session continues

II. Voting

- Voting sessions for each committee will be scheduled at the discretion of the committee chairs.
- 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 YouTube.
- Committee chairs may, at their discretion, allow members of the public to participate in voting sessions via Zoom Webinar.
- The outcome of a voting session will be published in the MGA hearing schedule as soon as feasible after the committee reports out

III. Public Bill Files

- The public can request an electronic copy of a public bill file by emailing the Assistant to the Chair for the committee assigned to 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 prior year bill files, please contact the Department of Legislative Services Library at 410-946-5400.

IV. General Policy and Procedures

- Each Committee Chair has discretion on how the committee will hear House bills and late filed Senate bills. Given the extraordinary circumstances for the operations of the session this year, it is very likely that late filed bills may not receive a timely hearing for consideration
- Each committee will post specific policies and instructions before Session begins. Please check each committee page on the MGA website for their witness guidelines.
 - [Budget & Taxation Committee](#)
 - [Education, Health, & Environmental Affairs Committee](#)
 - [Finance Committee](#)
 - [Judicial Proceedings Committee](#)
- Please note, the information above pertains to bill hearings. For oral and written testimony procedures for committee briefings, please reach out directly to the committee, through the email contact on the committee page.