

**Health and Government Operations
Witness Guidelines
2023 Session**

All bill hearings will be held in-person in Room 240 with a virtual oral testimony option (via Zoom) and streamed live on YouTube. If you would like to provide oral testimony, in-person is strongly encouraged. There is a cap of fifty (50) oral testimony witnesses per bill. The Committee will hear in-person oral testimony followed by virtual testimony.

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 might kick you out of the system. The MGA website homepage has [video tutorials](#) for MyMGA and testimony 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 the name in a MyMGA account after the sign up period has closed, that name will NOT be called to testify.




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 to virtual 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 between 8:00 am and 3:00 pm. See chart below for sign-up guidance.

Bill sponsors are automatically signed up for oral in-person testimony on their bill but must follow the same MyMGA procedures and timeframes to upload their written testimony (**bill sponsors:** just select “written” not “both” when uploading your testimony).

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-3:00pm	The previous Friday from 8:00am-3:00pm	The previous Monday from 8:00am-3:00pm	The previous Tuesday from 8:00am-3:00pm	The previous Wednesday from 8:00am-3:00pm
If a virtual witness, Zoom link emailed to you 	Previous Friday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday

Bill order will be updated and posted to MGA hearing schedule the day before a hearing.

There will be **no sharing the screen with presentations/PowerPoints** during Health and Government Operations 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 it during the hearing on their laptops along with all written testimony), or you may email the presentation in advance to Committee members.

Time limits:

This bill sponsor will have no time limit when presenting the bill. Each witness, including the sponsor panel, will have a time limit of 2 minutes. The Chair will announce any time limit reductions at the start of the hearing.

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 displayed on the screens. These 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 the hearing

room until your name is called to testify. Please do not maintain conversations, keep phones and electronic devices set to vibrate, and do not consume food or drink.

Virtual Witnesses:

If registered for virtual testimony, you will receive and email with a Zoom link. Please click the link before the start time of the bill hearing, which will place you in 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 match exactly with the name you used to sign up on My MGA and must be your first and last name.**

Changing your Zoom Name: Once you are signed in to your Zoom account, 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.

Virtual witness testimony follows in-person testimony for every bill. You will likely not be admitted right at the start of your bill hearing. Once virtual witnesses are called, the host will admit witnesses into the Zoom room. **Please keep your camera off and microphone muted. Once your name has been called, please turn on your camera and microphone.**

Please follow the bill hearing on the YouTube live stream to determine when your bill will be heard. You cannot hear the Zoom hearing when you are in the Zoom waiting room. **You must close YouTube when you enter the Zoom hearing or there will be a disruptive feedback/echo sound.**

After your bill is heard, you will be removed from the Zoom hearing. Again, you can watch the hearing via YouTube. If you have another bill being heard on the same date but later that same day, please click the link in your email again to rejoin, and you will be readmitted at the appropriate time for your next bill.

Written Testimony:

All submitted written testimony must be uploaded as a PDF and 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

After the bill hearing, you may request copies of written testimony 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 is on second reader, the testimony can be found on the MGA website on each 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 session ends**, or before session ends by calling the Committee to have it emailed to you.

Crossover Procedures:

All bills coming from Rules and all bills that are Senate cross-files of previously heard House bills will be **sponsor-only**.

The committee will accept oral testimony on Senate bills from the bill sponsor, a sponsor’s designee, or the representative of the Department that requested the legislation.

For Senate bills that do not have a House cross-file, the Chairman will allow one witness to speak in favor of the bill and one witness opposed, in addition to the bill sponsor.

For crossover bills and bills referred from the Rules Committee, the public may submit written testimony via the MyMGA portal to indicate their position for the bill. See MyMGA and testimony standards procedures above.

Accommodations:

For an ADA request, please contact the committee directly at AA_HGO@mlis.state.md.us or 301-858-3770.

Request for MGA Sign Language Interpretation - Please [use this link](#) to submit at least 5–7 business days in advance of the event (we will attempt to arrange interpreters on shorter notice but cannot guarantee availability). Interpreters are not generally available on an emergency or short-notice basis.

Any Questions?

Please call the Committee at 301-858-3770 with any questions.