

## Ways and Means Committee Witness Guidelines 2023 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 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 might 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 to virtual or vice versa once the sign up period has closed.

**Oral testimony sign up and written testimony submission is open for 7 hours, 2 business days before a scheduled hearing and starts at 8:00 am and closes 3:00 pm (business days do not include weekends).**

**Bill sponsors** are automatically signed up for oral in-person testimony on their bill, but must follow these 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.

Time limits: Each witness will generally have a time limit of 2 minutes. However, the time limit may be reduced to 1 minute if there is a large number of witnesses. The Chair will announce any time limit reductions at the start of the hearing.

There will be **no sharing the screen with presentations/PowerPoints** during Ways and Means 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.

**In-person Witnesses:**

The screens in the main lobby outside of the hearing room, display the bill order during each bill hearing (bill order status is updated throughout each hearing) and show the live hearing with closed captions.

**Virtual Witnesses:**

- Once you receive the email with the Zoom link for your hearing date, to start the process of entering the Zoom hearing, you will click the link 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**. How to make sure: 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.
- **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 your bill has many witnesses, you might not be admitted right at the start of your bill hearing as the host will admit witnesses in groups of about 5 at a time.
- You cannot hear the Zoom hearing when you are in the Zoom waiting room. You may watch the hearing via the YouTube live stream (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.**
- 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.

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 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.

The MGA website home page also has video tutorials for **MyMGA** and testimony sign up.

Please call the Committee at 410-841-3469 with any questions.