

2022 House of Delegates Covid-19 Rules

Plain Language Version

These are the rules the House of Delegates will follow during the 2022 legislative session. These rules will help keep the delegates, staff, and all visitors safe while COVID-19 is still a concern.

House of Delegates Office Building

The House of Delegates Office Building is where the House of Delegates committees meet. It is also where the delegates have their offices.

- The House of Delegates Office Building will be open during the 2022 legislative session. But all committee work will be done “virtually.” This means committees will meet online. The rules for how this will work are below.
- There will not be any big meetings or other get-togethers in the House Office Building.

Maryland State House

The Maryland State House is the building where the delegates meet as a whole group. It is where they discuss and vote on new laws recommended by the House committees. The room they meet in is called the House of Delegates Chamber. The delegates come together in person when they meet in the House of Delegates Chamber.

- There is an area in the House of Delegates Chamber where people can watch the House of Delegates work. It is called the “gallery.” There are not a lot of seats, so not everyone can get one. Once the gallery is full, no one else can get a seat.
- Everyone in the House Chamber and gallery must always wear a mask.

2022 House Committee Rules

All House committee work will be done online for the 2022 legislative session. These rules are based on the latest information about COVID-19. They could change.

Hearings

Bills are new laws the committees consider passing.

Bill hearings are when the committees meet to listen to people “testify” about bills.

Testifying on a bill means telling the committee if you are for or against a bill and why. People who testify are called “witnesses.”

You can watch bill hearings online. Go to the Maryland General Assembly (MGA) website at mgaleg.maryland.gov to watch.

Bill hearings will begin on January 13, 2022 on pre-filed bills.

- Pre-filed bills are bills delegates turn in before the legislative session starts. These bills are first in line to get hearings.
- Bills and committee information can be found on the MGA website.
- The hearing schedule is online the first full week of January 2022. It may change so check often.
- Starting at 10am on Tuesday, January 11, 2022, witnesses can sign-up to testify on pre-filed bills that have a hearing on January 13. Sign-up on the MGA website.
- Every House bill submitted by 5:00 pm on February 4th gets a hearing. House bills introduced after this date, go to the House Rules Committee. They may not get a hearing.
- The committee chairs decide how long the hearings will last.
- Hearing schedules for each committee are on the MGA website. They are posted in before the hearing.

Witness sign-up

If you want to testify on a bill, you must sign-up. You testify online.

- **Witness sign-up will be opened on the MGA website 48 hours before the bill hearing.**
 - Witnesses can sign up from 10am until 3pm.
 - Witnesses can sign up on:
 - Thursdays for Monday hearings.
 - Fridays for Tuesday hearings.
- Committees hear testimony on different bills each time they meet. **The day before the hearing, you will receive a Zoom link to the hearing, and you can look on the MGA website to see what order the bills will be discussed.** If a bill hearing is scheduled for a Monday, the Zoom link is sent and hearing order posted on Friday.
- Committees will let **up to 50 people testify on each bill.**

- Some committees may only allow you to testify on bills that are the same as a bill from the 2021 Session. Or, if the bill is a Senate bill from the 2022 Session and it is the same as a House bill that was already heard by the committee.
- If you want to testify with other witnesses, call the committee staff. This is called testifying as a panel. Committee chairs will try to let witnesses testify together if they want. Contact information for the committees is on the MGA website.

Subcommittees

Subcommittees are smaller committees that focus on specific issues. They report to the committees. Usually, you can watch the subcommittees work by going to the MGA website.

Voting sessions

Voting sessions are meetings where the committees discuss and vote on bills. You can watch committee voting sessions on the MGA website. A list of the bills that a committee will vote on is posted on the website at least two days before the voting session.

Maryland State House

When all the delegates come together, they meet in the House of Delegates Chamber. This is also called the “House Floor. The House Floor is where a bill is talked about, changed, and voted on.

- When delegates on a committee want a bill to become law, they vote “yes.” When most delegates on a committee vote “yes,” the bill then goes to all of the other delegates to talk about it together. This is called “second reading.” Second reading is when a bill is talked about and maybe changed. If changes are made, they are called “amendments.”
- After “second reading,” the bill goes to “third reading.” Third reading is when delegates vote on a bill. When most delegates vote “yes,” the bill passes.
- If the bill being talked about on the House Floor is a Senate bill, the delegates can also make changes to it. This is called a “floor amendment.”

Bill files

Bill files include the bill, written testimony, and other information related to the bill.

- After a committee votes “yes” on a bill, it goes to the House Floor for second reading. That is when the bill file will be on the MGA website.
- If a committee votes “no” on a bill, it will not go to the House Floor. If that happens, you can get the bill file on the website after the legislative session ends in April.
- If you can’t find the bill file on the website, you can ask for the bill file after the bill hearing. To ask for a bill file, call or email the committee staff. Contact information for each committee is on the website under the “Committees” tab.

Want more Information?

Go to the Maryland General Assembly website: mgaleg.maryland.gov

Or, go to the Department of Legislative Services website: dls.maryland.gov

410-946-5400