

# 2022 Senate Covid-19 Rules

## Easy-Read Version

### About the Maryland Senate



Below are rules the Senate will follow in 2022. These rules will help keep the senators, staff, and visitors safe while COVID-19 is still a problem. These rules could change.



The Senate is made up of people from every county in Maryland. Marylanders voted for them. They are called “senators.” They help make the state laws we have to follow.



The Senate has committees that work on different issues. Examples are education and health.

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## Rules about Shots and Masks



### COVID-19 Shots

All senators and people who work for the Senate must have their COVID-19 shots or get tested every week.



### Masks

Senators, people who work at the Senate, and visitors must wear face masks in the Senate Office Building and the Maryland State House.

- The Senate Office Building is where the Senate committees meet. It is also where the senators have their offices.
- The Maryland State House is the building where the senators meet as a whole group. It is where they discuss and vote on new laws recommended by the committees.



### Visiting Senators in their Offices

- Senators cannot have more than 4 people who are not staff or other senators in their offices at the same time.
- Senators are allowed to make other rules. For example, they might:

- Only meet with people by phone or online, or
- Only meet with people that have gotten their COVID-19 shots.

## Maryland State House



The room where the Senate meets in the Maryland State House is called the “Senate Chamber.” The senators come together in person when they meet in the Senate Chamber.

The Senate usually meets:

- Mondays at 8:00 p.m.
- Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays at 10:00 a.m.
- Fridays at 11:00 a.m.



There is an area in the Senate Chamber where people can watch the Senate work. It is called the “gallery.” Some seats in the gallery will be blocked off so people do not sit too close together. This keeps people safe during COVID-19. When the gallery is full, no one else can get a seat.



Everyone in the gallery must always wear a mask.

## Committees



### Bills

One of the first steps to make a new law is for committees to meet. When they meet, they have “hearings” about “bills.”

- **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**.



### Hearings

Most Senate committees will have their hearings on Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays.

There is a [calendar](#) on the Maryland General Assembly (MGA) website that shows when the hearings will be for each committee. The information is there at least a week before the hearing.



Until February 11th, all Senate committees will do their work online. This means everyone meets using their computers, tablets, or cell phones. An iPad is an example of a tablet. No one meets in person.



Starting February 14, all Senate committees will meet in person.

## Witnesses



If you want to testify on a bill, you must sign-up. You sign-up at [MyMGA Tracking](#). You must make an account. To learn more, watch this [video](#).



### Until February 11th:

- Sign up starts 48 hours before the bill hearing.
- You can sign up from 10am until 3pm.
- You sign up on Thursdays for hearings that are on Monday. You sign up on Fridays for hearings that are on Tuesday.
- Witnesses testify using Zoom. The night before the hearing, you will receive a Zoom link to the hearing in an email. If a bill hearing is scheduled for a Monday, the Zoom link is sent on Friday. You use the link to testify using your computer, tablet, or cell phone.



### Starting on February 14th

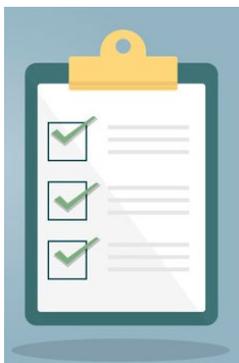
- Witness sign-up starts the day before the hearing at 4:00 p.m. Witnesses can sign up anytime from then until 10:00 a.m. the next day. You testify in person in the room with the committee.



Committees talk about many different bills each time they meet. You can find out what order the bills will be discussed by going to [MGA calendar](#). Make sure to choose the correct date.

- The information will be listed before the hearing.

## Committee Rules



You cannot sign-up to testify and then ask someone else to take your place. The chairperson of each committee makes other rules for witnesses. Examples of rules are:

- How long people can testify,
- If people can sign up late to testify, and
- If people can turn in written testimony late.

To read the rules for each committee, go to [mgaleg.maryland.gov](http://mgaleg.maryland.gov). Click on the “Committees” tab.

## Voting Sessions



“Voting sessions” are meetings where the committees vote on bills. This is how they decide if a bill will become a law.

- Senators will meet in person for voting sessions.
- You can find a list of the bills the committees will vote on by going to the [MGA calendar](#). Make sure to choose the correct date. The information will be there before the committee votes.
- Until February 11th, you can watch the voting sessions by going to [mgaleg.maryland.gov](http://mgaleg.maryland.gov). Look for the yellow ribbon that says “Live Media.”
- Starting February 14th, you can watch the voting sessions in person.

## Bill Files



Each bill has a “bill file.” This is all the important information about the bill. It includes the bill, written testimony people sent in, and other information.

- You can always call or email the committee staff to help you get a bill file.
- Their information is on the [Senate Committee webpage](#).



**Want more Information?**

Go to the Maryland General Assembly website at [mgaleg.maryland.gov](http://mgaleg.maryland.gov)

Or, the Department of Legislative Services website at [dls.maryland.gov](http://dls.maryland.gov)

Or, call 410-946-5400