

## House Economic Matters Committee (ECM)

### Witness Guidelines and Committee FAQs

#### Bill Hearings

For the 2024 Session, all bill hearings will be held in hybrid format and live streamed on YouTube.

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>

Bill Hearings will, generally, begin at 1:00 pm and the order of scheduled bills will be posted on the Hearing Schedule 1 day prior to the bill hearing.

*For guidance on how to use the MyMGA portal, create your account, or navigate the witness sign-up and testimony submission features, refer to the two video tutorials on the Maryland General Assembly website. 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.*

There will be **no sharing the screen with presentations/PowerPoints** during Economic Matters bill hearings by **virtual witnesses**. If you would like Committee members to have your presentation, you may upload it using *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).

#### Witness Signup and Testimony Upload

Oral testimony sign-up and written testimony (PDF documents only) submission must be done using the *MyMGA* feature on the [Maryland General Assembly website home page](#) (see icon on the upper right corner of home page).

Oral testimony, **in-person**, is strongly encouraged, but should you choose to testify virtually, you **MUST** enter a valid email address that you can access. This is how you will receive the Zoom link for admission into the hearing to testify.

**Oral testimony sign-up and written testimony submission is only open for 10 hours, 2 business days before a scheduled hearing. The sign-up period starts at 8:00 am and closes at 6:00 pm (business days do not include weekends). There is NO switching from in-person to virtual or vice versa once the sign-up period has closed.**

**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 timing for witness signup and testimony upload:**

Hearing is on a:	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Sign up to testify and/or submit written testimony on:	The previous Thursday from 8:00am-6:00pm	The previous Friday from 8:00am-6:00pm	The previous Monday from 8:00am-6:00pm	The previous Tuesday from 8:00am-6:00pm	The previous Wednesday from 8:00am-6:00pm
Zoom link sent:	Previous Friday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday

**Uploading Written Testimony**

File names on testimony must include the bill number and the name of the organization and/or person testifying, such as “HB0135\_PSC\_Smith.pdf.” It may be helpful to include a position or other explanation after the name, such as FAV, UNF, FWA, INFO, or AMD.

Written testimony **must** be submitted as a PDF file. Testimony submitted in any other format **will not** be accepted.

The Committee is no longer able to accept written testimony in advance of the designated sign-up period.

**Any testimony submitted after the sign-up period is considered late and should be emailed to [AA ECM@mlis.state.md.us](mailto:AA_ECM@mlis.state.md.us). Late testimony will not be added to the bill file prior to the bill hearing.** Late testimony will be uploaded to the Committee File on the next Committee workday.

**In-Person & Virtual Witness Testimony: (limited to 2 minutes)**

**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 the screens 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”. Your name must match exactly with the name you used to sign-up on MyMGA and must be your first **and** last name. How to make sure: once you are signed on 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.

#### **Testimony After Crossover**

After Crossover, the committee will receive testimony on cross-filed Senate bills, only if scheduled for a hearing, from the sponsor or the sponsor's designee. On departmental bills, the appropriate department will be allowed to testify. Others are welcome to submit written testimony. On all other bills, limited oral testimony may be received from the proponents and opponents only at the discretion of the committee chair.

#### **Request For Testimony**

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.

**Please contact the ECM Committee at (410) 841-3519 / (301) 858-3519 with any questions.**