

Judicial Proceedings Committee 2021 General Witness Guidelines

I. Bill Hearings

- All bill hearings will be held virtually via Zoom and streamed live on YouTube.
- The Committee traditionally hears bills on Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays.
- During the first part of session, on days when the Senate floor does not meet, bill hearings will begin at 11:00 am. On days when there are floor sessions, the Committee will schedule bill hearings based on the floor session schedule and number of bills assigned to the committee.
- All scheduled bill hearings will be posted in the Maryland General Assembly (MGA) hearing schedule along with the *Live* link to go directly to the meeting. Please check the schedule periodically for the most up to date information.
- The bill order will be posted in the MGA hearing schedule the morning of the scheduled bill hearing. The Chair will also announce the bill order at the beginning of each bill hearing and will update the audience on which bill will be called next at the start of the prior bills introduction.
- In order to register to provide oral testimony or submit written testimony individuals **MUST sign up for an MGA** account on the MGA website. [Click here for a tutorial.](#)

Oral Testimony

- As stated in the COVID-19 Protocols for Session for the Senate, the number of witnesses to provide oral testimony on each bill will be limited. There will be up to four (4) proponents, two (2) favorable with amendments, and four (4) opponents.
 - **Proponents:** The bill sponsor will be able to select up to three (3) witnesses to testify on the Senator's bill. The sponsoring Senator will also be able to designate one of those witnesses as the "lead proponent." The fourth witness will be selected at random via the MGA witness sign up system. If the sponsoring Senator does not provide or designate witnesses by 3:00 PM two (2) days before the hearing date, those witness slots will be opened up to the public and additional witnesses will be selected at random via the witness sign up system.

- **Favorable with Amendments:** One (1) witness will be selected at random via the witness sign up system, and one (1) will be selected at the discretion of the Chair.
- **Opponents:** Two (2) witnesses will be selected at random via the witness sign up system and two (2) will be reserved as organization slots. The Chair will select the organizational slots from the witness sign up system to ensure that the organizations who most accurately reflect groups opposed are provided the opportunity to testify.
 - **Please note, if you would like to be considered for an organization slot, when you create your MGA account, you MUST include the name of the organization you are representing.**
- All witnesses will have two-minutes and thirty seconds (2:30) to testify, with the exception of the “lead proponent” who will have five-minutes (5:00).
- Bill sponsors should provide information on their selected witnesses by completing the sponsor witness form (provided by the President’s office). The form should be emailed to Sandy Popp, Assistant to the Chair by 3:00 pm two (2) business days in advance of a scheduled bill hearing.
- All witnesses, **including sponsor witnesses**, must create an MGA account and must sign up through the MGA website.
- Witness sign up will open two (2) business days in advance of a scheduled bill hearing and will be open from 8:00 am – 3:00 pm.
- Late witness sign up will not be allowed.
- The Chair has discretion to expand the number of witnesses who testify on a bill in consultation with the minority party’s ranking member of the committee for an *expanded hearing*. This will be an extremely rare occurrence, and if expanded, the number of witnesses on a bill will double. For proponent witnesses, the bill sponsor will be able to select up to four (4) witnesses and the other four (4) witnesses will be selected at random.
- Audio visual presentations will only be allowed from the bill sponsor and must be provided two (2) business days in advance of the hearing date.
- Any special requests for bill order must be made by the sponsor of the bill and must be submitted to Sandy Popp, Assistant to the Chair two (2) business days in advance of a scheduled bill hearing.
- All selected witnesses will be notified of their selection the night before the scheduled bill hearing, and will receive the Zoom log-in information at that time. **The Zoom link is confidential and should not be shared.**
- Additional Zoom instructions can be found below.

Written Testimony

- Any individual or organization that intends to provide written testimony, including sponsor witnesses, must create a “My MGA” account on the MGA website.
- Written testimony **must** be submitted two (2) business days in advance of a scheduled bill hearing and will be open from 8:00 am – 3:00 pm.
- Please note, the MGA website does not support internet explorer. Please use another web browser to upload your written testimony.
- Late testimony cannot be accepted.

Bill Hearing Timeline

	<u>Monday Hearing</u>	<u>Tuesday Hearing</u>	<u>Wednesday Hearing</u>	<u>Thursday Hearing</u>	<u>Friday Hearing</u>
Oral Witness & Written Testimony Sign up	Thursday from 8AM - 3PM	Friday from 8AM - 3PM	Monday from 8AM - 3PM	Tuesday from 8AM - 3PM	Wednesday from 8AM - 3PM
Witnesses from Sponsor	Thursday by 3PM	Friday by 3PM	Monday by 3PM	Tuesday by 3PM	Wednesday by 3PM
Signup Link Sent/Witnesses Finalized	By COB Friday	By COB Monday	By COB Tuesday	By COB Wednesday	By COB Thursday

II. **PLEASE NOTE:** These timelines are a goal for committees throughout Session. Timelines are subject to adjustment at times, and may need to be reevaluated after crossover, and as Session continues

Zoom

- All witnesses will testify via Zoom with a link provided, and **must have their cameras on for their testimony.**
- **Witnesses cannot designate someone else to take their slot.**
- Witnesses must sign into Zoom with an identifiable username i.e. first name last name. If Committee staff are unable to identify a user, they will not be admitted into the Zoom hearing room due to safety concerns.
- Witnesses that are testifying on the first bill should log into Zoom fifteen (15) minutes prior to the scheduled bill hearing start time (*the bill order will be posted on the*

MGA website the morning of the scheduled bill hearing).

- All other witnesses must follow along the hearings via YouTube to know when the bill they are testifying on is going to be called by the Chair, and should log into Zoom when the bill before their bill is called.
- Committee staff will admit witnesses into the Zoom hearing room right before the Chair is going to call the bill they are testifying on.
- The Committee asks for witnesses' patience as they wait in the Zoom waiting room.
- Once admitted to the hearing room, witnesses should exit out of YouTube (to prevent feedback) and should remain muted until recognized by the Chair.
- If a witness fails to log into Zoom by the time the bill they are testifying on is called, they will lose their timeslot.
- All witnesses on a bill will present prior to the Committee members asking questions.
- All witnesses should stay logged into the Zoom meeting until the Q&A session concludes and the Chair calls the next bill.
- Once the Chair calls the next bill, witnesses should exit the Zoom meeting or they will be logged out by Committee staff.

III. Voting

- The Committee voting schedule is at the discretion of the Chair, and will depend on the workload of the Committee.
- Voting sessions and voting lists will be available in the MGA hearing schedule 24 hours in advance of a voting session when feasible.
- All voting sessions will be live-streamed via YouTube.
- The outcome of a voting session will be published in the MGA hearing schedule after the committee reports out.

IV. Public Bill Files

- The public can request an electronic copy of a public bill file by emailing sandra.popp@mlis.state.md.us.
 - Witness testimony and the oral witness list will be available the day after the bill is heard in committee.
 - Any additional materials will be available after the bill passes third reader on the Senate floor.
- Written testimony will also be available through the MGA website when the bill is on the Senate floor for second reader. For bills that do not pass out of a committee, written testimony will be available on the website after the legislative session.

- Written testimony for bills heard during the 2020 MGA session is available on the MGA website.
- For prior year bill files, please contact the Department of Legislative Services Library at 410-946-5400.

V. General Policy and Procedures

- Late filed Senate Bills will be sponsor only and may not be heard prior to crossover.
- House Bills:
 - In general the Committee does not hold hearings on House Bills that have been cross-filed in the Senate.
 - Additionally, when the Committee schedules a House Bill for a public hearing, the Committee will accept oral testimony from the Bill's sponsor only UNLESS there is opposition. If there is opposition, the Committee will hold a limited bill hearing.
- Please note, the information above pertains to bill hearings. For oral and written testimony procedures for Committee briefings, please reach out directly to the Committee.