

Ways and Means Committee Witness Guidelines 2021 Session

All bill hearings will be held virtually via Zoom and streamed live on YouTube. You can view all hearings via YouTube live 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 **My MGA** on the [Maryland General Assembly website home page](#) (see upper right corner of home page). **My MGA 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.

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.

Oral testimony sign up and written testimony submission is open for 5 hours, 2 calendar days before a scheduled hearing and starts at 8:00 am and closes 3:00 pm (not including weekends).

Bill sponsors are automatically signed up for oral testimony on their bill, but must follow these same My MGA procedures and time frames 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
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
Zoom link sent:	Previous Friday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday

Bill order will be posted to the MGA hearing schedule the day before a hearing.

Oral testimony will be capped at a maximum of 50 witnesses per bill. The witness sign up software and Zoom platform will not allow for witness panels (i.e., groups of witnesses) this session.

Time limits: Each witness will generally have a time limit of 3 minutes. However, the time limit may be reduced to 1 or 2 minutes if there is a large number of witnesses. The Chair will announce any time limit reductions at the start of the hearing.

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.** Also, **do not use your organization’s name or acronym when joining the Zoom hearing.** **The host will not admit you to the Zoom hearing if the name seen by the host does not match the first and last name used to sign up.** The host will admit you to the hearing once your bill is next to be heard. 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 15 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.**

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. 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 **My MGA** and testimony sign up.

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

***If you are signed in to your Zoom account, prior to joining the hearing make sure your name will appear correctly: go to your "Profile" in your account and click on "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.**