

Senate Finance Committee (FIN)
Senator Delores G. Kelley, Chair
Senator Brian J. Feldman, Vice Chair

2021 Witness Guidelines

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 full Senate does not meet, bill hearings may 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 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 bill's introduction.
- In order to register to provide oral testimony or submit written testimony individuals **MUST create a MyMGA** 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 (4-2-4 configuration).
 - ❖ **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 three (3) 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 MyMGA 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 must provide information on their selected witnesses by completing the sponsor witness form (provided by the President’s office). The form should be emailed to Tammy Kraft, Assistant to the Chair, by 3:00 pm two (2) business days in advance of the scheduled bill hearing.
- All witnesses, **including sponsor witnesses**, must create a **MyMGA** account and sign up through the MGA website.
- Witness sign up will open only for a single 5 hour period. This will open two (2) business days in advance of a scheduled bill hearing and will be open from 10:00 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 (8-4-8 configuration). 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 Tammy Kraft, Assistant to the Chair, two (2) business days in advance of a scheduled bill hearing.
- All witnesses selected to provide oral testimony will be notified 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.**

Written Testimony

- Any individual or organization that intends to provide written testimony, including sponsor witnesses, must create a **MyMGA** account on the MGA website.

PLEASE NOTE: Sponsor witnesses should indicate that they are providing written testimony ONLY (and should not sign up as providing oral testimony).

- Written testimony **must** be submitted two (2) business days in advance of a scheduled bill hearing and will be open only for a single 5 hour period from 10:00 am – 3:00 pm.
- 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 10 AM – 3PM	Friday from 10AM - 3PM	Monday from 10AM - 3PM	Tuesday from 10AM - 3PM	Wednesday from 10AM - 3PM
Witnesses from Sponsor	Thursday by 3PM	Friday by 3PM	Monday by 3PM	Tuesday by 3PM	Wednesday by 3PM
Zoom link sent to selected witnesses	Friday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday

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** log into Zoom with an identifiable username *i.e.* first and last name that matches the name used to sign up. If committee staff do not recognize the username, they will not be admitted into the Zoom hearing room due to security concerns.

- Witnesses that are testifying on the first or second bill should log into Zoom **fifteen (15) minutes** prior to the scheduled bill hearing start time. Those who are not testifying on the first or second bill should log into Zoom at the scheduled start time. ***The bill order will be posted on the MGA website the morning of the scheduled bill hearing.***
- The committee asks for witnesses' patience as they wait in the Zoom waiting room until their bill is called.
- Once admitted to the hearing room, if witnesses are following the hearings on YouTube, 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 testify 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 removed by Committee staff.

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.

Public Bill Files

- The public can request an electronic copy of a public bill file by emailing AA_FIN@mlis.state.md.us.
- Witness testimony and the 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 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.