Guide to Submitting Comments and Testifying Virtually

2022 General Assembly Session
First Things First...

- **Legislators want to hear from their constituents.** While comments are welcome from anyone in the public, you hold the most power when you identify yourself as a constituent.

- **Not sure who your legislator is?** You can visit the [Who’s My Legislator](#) website to learn who your State and Federal representatives are.

- Under each of your representatives’ names, you can **click on “more info”** to see their contact information, committee assignments, and which bills they are patroning.
Learn more about a bill

• You can find a summary of a bill and the full text by visiting the General Assembly website.
  • Click on the bar across the top of the page or enter a bill number directly in the search box on the home page.

• Once you enter the bill number and hit “go”, the Legislative Information System website will load all information related to the bill.
  • In addition to bill text, you can view all of the bill patrons, which committee the bill has been assigned to, which legislators sit on that committee, and any voting history related to the bill.
Ready to take action?

• The first step you can take is **calling or emailing your legislator directly** to ask them to support or oppose a specific bill.
  • [House of Delegates contact information](#)
  • [Senate contact information](#)
• Remember that bills are designated by their point of origin (the House or Senate) by starting with “HB” or “SB”.
  • In the first half of the General Assembly session, you will contact your legislator from the corresponding branch of government (HB = Delegate; SB = Senator).
  • Once we reach the middle of session, each chamber will have heard all of their own bills. The bills that have passed the chamber will now be heard by the opposite chamber (we call this ‘crossover’).
    • At this point, you will need to advocate for a bill again to see it across the finish line. For bills that originated in the House, you will now need to contact your Senator. For bills that originated in the Senate, you will contact your Delegate.
The next step you can take is to submit a comment or testify (in person or virtually) in support/opposition of a specific bill before the committee.

Open the House Meeting Schedule, look for the committee that your bill has been assigned to, and click on “view agenda”.

Once you confirm that your bill is on the agenda, you can click on “signup to speak or submit comments”.

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House of Delegates – Submitting Comments & Testifying

• On the next page, select whether you would like to attend the meeting remotely to speak, provide written comments, or both.
  • If you signup to speak remotely, we strongly urge you to ALSO submit written comments. There are time constraints during meetings and the possibility of technical difficulties.

• They ask if you are speaking on behalf of an organization. Remember, you are speaking as a constituent, so you are representing yourself, not an organization (unless you are a business owner). You can leave this blank.

• As you scroll down the page, you will indicate which bills you are speaking for/against and you will have space to provide written comments. Click submit when you’re done.
  • You may also attach a file, so you can consider attaching a relevant fact sheet or photo.
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• Additional Information:
  • Many of our bills will be heard in the House Agriculture Chesapeake and Natural Resources committee, which meets on Wednesdays at 8:30 am. However, before a bill reaches the full committee, it must pass out of the subcommittee. House Ag has 3 subcommittees that meet before full committee meetings
    • Agriculture Subcommittee (Wednesdays at 4:00 pm)
    • Chesapeake Subcommittee (Mondays at 4:00 pm)
    • Natural Resources Subcommittee (Wednesdays at 7:00 am)
  • The full schedule of 2022 General Assembly Session meetings is available here.
  • Meeting agendas are typically posted 1-2 days before the committee meets.
  • Registration to speak before a committee opens as soon as a meeting agenda is posted. If the meeting occurs in the morning, registration will close at midnight prior to the meeting. If the meeting occurs in the afternoon, registration will close at noon.
  • If you are testifying virtually, you will receive a Zoom link via email approximately 30 minutes before the meeting.
Senate – Submitting Comments & Testifying

• The Senate’s webpages function a bit differently from the House.

• **To check the agenda for Senate committees, visit their Dockets webpage and select the committee you are interested in; this will open the Legislative Information System (LIS) website. Click on the date of the meeting to see the agenda.**

• **For subcommittee agendas**, click on the “subcommittees” tab and click on the subcommittee of interest. Once the LIS website opens, click on “committee dockets”.

• You can view a full schedule of the Senate Committee meetings [here](#).
Senate – Submitting Comments & Testifying

- Open the Senate Meeting Schedule and look for the committee that your bill has been assigned to.
- At the top of the page, you will be able to click on the committee link to signup for virtual public testimony.
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• Provide your contact information to complete your registration.

• After you register, you will receive an email from the Clerk and during the meeting, you will be asked to ‘raise your hand’ in Zoom if you would like to testify for/against a specific bill.

• If other organizations/people speak before you and hit the points that you wanted to make, you can say that you agree with [name of partner/person] and [support/oppose] the bill. There are many people waiting to speak, so brevity is appreciated!