

How to Testify Before the Maryland General Assembly

Oral Testimony

Each committee has their own rules for how testimony will play out. Generally, a bill or series of bills will be announced. The sponsor of the bill (Senator or Delegate) will give a description of the bill and testify on why it's needed. They may bring up witnesses they've selected to speak in support of the bill. Once they've finished, the chair of the committee will usually call upon expert witness panels: one to testify in support and one against the bill(s). After they finish, the chair will start calling upon everyone else who has signed up to testify, usually in alphabetical order of each witness's last name. The witness will be given a set time to testify (usually 2-3 minutes) on the bill or bills before them. Reading what you've submitted as written testimony is generally frowned upon. Instead, make or further a point that has not been stated yet by someone else. Respectfully speak your mind. Be sincere and concise. Represent your fellow self defense supporters well. Committee members may ask questions of you, so be ready to think on your feet. When the committee is finished with you, they'll call the next name and so on and so forth. If you're called upon and someone has already covered your points, it doesn't hurt to simply say "Support" or "Oppose" and cede your time (the Chair likes that).

These hearings can last quite a while and sometimes into the evening. Other bills may be heard before the gun bills come up, so be prepared to wait some time to speak. If you were unable to come down during the day because of work or other commitments, be sure to check social media, your email, forums, etc... to see if the proceedings are still going on because there still may be enough time for you to come down and testify in person!

Written Testimony

Once again, each committee has their own rules for submitting written testimony. Both Judiciaries require multiple copies of your testimony and there is a submission deadline which must be met in person. Written testimony must include the following on the front page: the bill number, the name of the individual or organization submitting the testimony, and their position (Support, Support with Amendments, Oppose, or Informational). Submitting written testimony alone doesn't require you to enter yourself on the touchscreens for your testimony to be received, but it doesn't hurt for you to do that as well. If you are unable to come down to Annapolis to submit your testimony yourself, reach out to your fellow supporters. Your Senator or Delegate's staff may also be able to help you out as well.

House Judiciary Committee

The JUD requires 30 COPIES of your written testimony and it must be submitted BEFORE 11AM. The Clerk's room is on the RIGHT of the committee entrance doors.

Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee

The JPR requires 16 COPIES of your written testimony and it must be submitted BEFORE 11AM. The Clerk's room is on the RIGHT of the committee entrance doors.