



## MARYLAND DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES COALITION

Dedicated to the rights and quality of life for people with developmental disabilities in Maryland

### Using the Maryland General Assembly Website

The Maryland General Assembly website has a variety of resources available for you to keep on top of all aspects of the legislative process. You can use it to find and track bills, attend hearings, contact legislators, sign up to testify at hearings, and more. The Arc Maryland has compiled some instructions on navigating some of the more commonly used parts of the site that you can use during Legislative Session.

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### Account Management

#### Making a “My MGA” Account

Many of the tools on the MGA website resources need a “My MGA” account to use them. You should make a “My MGA” account if you want to keep track of bills or sign up to testify at a hearing.

1. Go to <http://mgaleg.maryland.gov/mgawebsite/Account/Register/Tracking>
2. Put in your name, email, and make a password to start your account.
  - a. You will be asked to go to your email to finish registering.
3. On your email from no-reply@mlis.state.md.us, click the link in the email.
  - a. It will bring you to a page that says “Account Registration Complete.”

## Signing In

1. Go to <http://mgaleg.maryland.gov/mgawebsite/Account/Login> or click the “My MGA” button in the top right corner of the website home page.
2. Type in your email and the password you made when registering.
  - a. Once you hit “Sign in,” it will bring you back to the home page.

## Legislation

### Learning More About Bills

Each bill introduced during session has its own page on the website. You can find a lot of useful info about the bills and changes to the bills on these pages.

1. Type in the bill name in the search bar in the top right corner of the website page.
  - a. When you search for the bill, make sure to start with “hb”(for house bills) or “sb” (for senate bills).
2. On a bill page, you can find the full bill by clicking the bill number at the top of the page.
3. Details on the bill can be found on the page, like a few sentences about what it does, where the bill is at right now, who sponsors it, and the committee that is looking at it.
  - a. You can also click “History” at the bottom of the website page to see different steps of the process the bill has already been through. This will also say if there have been any changes made to the bill, and who changed it.

### Creating a Bill Tracking List

If you want to keep up with where more than one bill is, you can put them together on a list.

1. On the MGA home page, click the “My MGA” button at the top right corner of the page and sign into your account.
2. To create a list of bills, click the “Add List” button on this page.
3. A pop up will open with some choices:
  - a. Name your list under “List Name.”
  - b. Under “Format” choose the kind of file you want the list to be in when you get emails from them with changes to the bills and updates on where they are. (CSV is an Excel File which puts it into a table)
  - c. Under “Email Notice,” click “Yes” to get email updates on where bills are.
  - d. Under “Bill Changes Only...”
    - i. Click “Yes” to get a daily email that only has changes that have happened to a bill or where it is. This is good to use if you have your own list on your computer or written down somewhere. You can use the changes that the email says to update your own list.
    - ii. Click “No” to get a daily email that has every bill on your list, even if they do not have a change since the last email. This is good to use if you check your email less often.
  - e. Click “Save” when you are done!

## Adding Bills to Your Lists

Once you have a list made, you need to add bills to it to track them! There are two ways to add bills to your list:

- **Option 1 – Adding a lot of bills at once. Do this if you know all the bill numbers that you want to put in the list.**
  1. Go back to the “Bill Tracking Lists” menu on the side of your “My MGA” page.
  2. Click the button for “Edit List Items.”
  3. Using the “Filter” box, type in the bill number you want to add to your list.
    - a. If you are looking for a House Bill, be sure to check off the bill with “hb” in its name.
    - b. If you are looking for a Senate Bill, be sure to check off the bill with “sb” in its name.
  4. Once you find the bill you are looking for, click the check box next to it to add it to your list.
    - a. If there is another bill in the house or senate that is the same, a pop-up will come up. Click “yes” if you want to add that other bill to your list, too.
- **Option 2 – Adding bills from their website pages.**
  1. Type the bill name into the search bar in the top right corner of the website page.
    - a. When you look for the bill, make sure to start it with “hb” or “sb.”
  2. When you are on the website page for your bill, click the yellow pin button in the top left. It is above the bill number.
  3. When the pop-up comes up, pick the list you want to add that bill to.
  4. Click “Save.”

## Signing Up to Testify at Hearings

If you plan on speaking at a hearing during session, you will have to sign up using your “My MGA” account. The only time you can do this is two work days before the bill hearing happens in the Senate (between 8 AM and 6 PM), or in the House (between 10 AM and 6 PM). So, if the hearing you want to speak at is on a Wednesday, you have to sign up on the website that Monday. But, if the House hearing you want to speak at is on a Tuesday, you have to sign up on the Friday before it, because the legislators do not work on Saturday or Sunday.

1. On the MGA website page, click the “My MGA” button at the top right corner of the page.
2. On the menu on the side, click “Witness Signup.”
3. Next to where it says “Committees” click the dropdown menu.
4. Click the committee that the bill you want to testify for has a hearing in.
5. Scroll down the page to find the bill you want to testify for.
6. Once you find the bill you want to testify for, check off the box that is to the left of the bill number.
7. In the “Position” Dropdown menu, click the position you have for the bill.
  - a. “Favorable” means you agree with the bill.
  - b. “Favorable with Amendments” means you agree with some of the bill, but want other parts of it to change.

- c. “Informational Only” means you want to give the committee some more information they do not have, but you do not support or disagree with the bill.
  - d. “Unfavorable” Means that you do not agree with the bill.
8. In the “Testimony” Dropdown menu, click what kind of testimony you want to share.
  - a. Click “Oral” if you want to speak your testimony on a video call with the committee.
  - b. Click “Written” if you want the committee to read testimony that you typed out on the computer.
  - c. Click “Both” if you want to speak your testimony on a video call with the committee and have the committee read testimony that you typed out on the computer.
9. If you picked “Written” or “Both” for testimony, you need to click the “upload file(s)” button.
  - a. In the pop-up menu that comes up, click “Choose Files.”
  - b. Find where you saved the testimony on your computer and click that file.
  - c. Once the file for your testimony is picked, click ok!
10. After you have finished adding the details for your testimony, click “Save” at the top of the page.

## Viewing a Hearing Livestream

If you want to watch a bill hearing as it happens, you can do it from the website.

1. Go to the MGA website, click “Meetings” on the menu at the top of the page.
2. Sort through the options at the top of the page to find the hearing you want to find. You can look for it by picking the committee that is meeting about it and pick the date it is happening.
3. If the hearing is happening right now, click the red “Live!” button next to the committee name and it will bring you to a Youtube page to watch the meeting.
  - a. If the meeting has not started yet, the “Live!” button will not be there.

## Legislators

You can use the website to find out who your legislators are, find out how to email them, or how to meet with them.

### **Finding Your Legislators**

1. On the MGA website homepage, click the “Members” button in the top left corner of the page.
2. Underneath where it says “Find My Representatives,” click “Lookup.”
3. Type in your address and ZIP code. Then click “Find.”
4. Scroll down the page to find what district you live in and a list of your who represents you.

- a. You can email all the legislators you represent you at once by clicking “Email” next to “Contact checked Legislators.”
5. You can click each name of the State Senators or Delegates if you want to go to their website page.
6. On a legislator’s page, you can find what committee they are part of, and how to contact them by phone and by email.
  - a. Under their name, click “Legislation” to find a list of what bills they are working on.
  - b. Under their name, click “Biography” to learn more about what committees, and smaller groups they have been part of in the past.

## Scheduling a Meeting with Legislators

1. At the bottom of a legislator’s page, an email is available for you to contact them. Click the email if you want to find a time to meet with them online.
  - a. Some legislator pages also have a meeting sign-up page, but not all do. If your legislators has this, it would be at the bottom of the page, and you should use that to meet with them instead of sending them an email.

## Finding Committees

Many important decisions on bills are made in committees. Hearings occur in committees that a bill is assigned to. Each committee talks about bills that are part of a similar topic. You can look at who is in each committee on the website.

1. On the MGA website homepage, click “Committees” from the menu at the top.
2. To look at what Senate Committees there are, click “Senate” from the menu on the left side. To view what House Committees there are, click “House” from the menu on the left side.
3. On the House or Senate Committee page, there is a list of “Standing” Committees. These Committees meet a lot for hearings on bills.
  - a. On the list, click the name of the Committee to see who is in the committee and how to talk to them.
  - b. Click the name of the Chairperson to see more about them.
  - c. Click the name of the Vice Chairperson to see more about them.
  - d. Click “Email” across from the committee to email the Chairperson.

**While these are the parts of the website you will use the most, feel free to explore other aspects of the website on your own to get familiar with all of its features.**

**For questions about using the MGA website, contact Luc Chausse, Director of Communications and Engagement at The Arc Maryland, by email at [lchausse@thearcmd.org](mailto:lchausse@thearcmd.org).**