

Getting Ready for MDGA Session 2022

1 / 11 / 2022



**Association of
Community Services**
OF HOWARD COUNTY



Housekeeping

- PPT Slides will be on the ACS website following the Lunch n Learn → Go to Members Only > State Legislative Resources > General Session Information
- We'll invite questions in between sections plus stay on longer at the end for any additional Q&A
- Please remain muted if you are not speaking
- Feel free to interact in the chat throughout

A Little About Me...

- Prior to ACS: full-time, issue-based advocate/lobbyist for a nonprofit before the MD General Assembly for 3 legislative sessions. After that, worked for Catholic Charities as Assistant Director, Parish Social Ministry.
- Issue areas of focus (in Annapolis): poverty (e.g., income, EITC, hunger, homelessness, utility assistance), immigration, workplace justice, re-entry after incarceration, some health care issues, some environmental issues, human trafficking, language access, voting
- Juggled working on individual organizational issues of interest with working through coalitions
- Have done legislative advocacy both as a registered lobbyist and as an individual constituent
- Favorite places in Annapolis: Potato Valley Café, The Red Bean, Mason's Lobster, Iron Rooster

Today's Objectives

- Understand the Timeline of Important Dates
- Plan Strategic Involvement for Busy Nonprofits
- Navigate and Utilize the General Assembly's Website to Maximize Its Resources
- Tips for Giving Effective Testimony



Important Dates to Know

2022 Session Dates of Interest

From the MDGA website: <https://mgaleg.maryland.gov/Pubs-Current/2022rs-Session-dates.pdf>

- January 12th at 12pm – First Day of Session
- January 19th – Deadline for Governor to introduce budgets
- February 4th – House’s Bill Drop deadline
- February 7th – Senate’s Bill Drop deadline
- March 21st – Crossover deadline
- April 11th – Sine Die

Weekly Routine

Within the 90-day session is the typical weekly schedule:

- Floor Sessions (whole chamber):
 - Mondays at 8pm
 - Tuesdays, Wednesdays, Thursdays at 10am
 - Fridays at 11am
- Committee Hearing Schedules – usually Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays starting at 1pm
- Howard County Delegation Meetings – usually Wednesday mornings before floor sessions
- Better times to schedule meetings – usually before 10am, 11:30am-12:45pm, sometimes evenings early into session

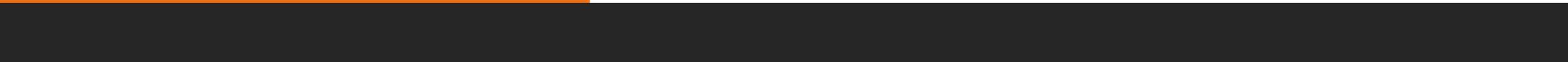
2022 Post-Session Dates to Know

- April 30th – Bills must be presented to Governor
- May 30th – Governor must sign/veto/allow to pass without signature (<https://governor.maryland.gov/bill-signings/>)
- June 1st – Earliest date for bills to take effect
- July 1st – Budget, tax, and revenue bills go into effect
- October 1st – All other bills usually* go into effect

*Note: Legislation can specify a different effective date



Plan Your Advocacy Strategy



First Things First

Familiarize yourself with Maryland State Ethics Commission regulations – you may need to register as a lobbyist if you communicate:

- in the presence of an elected official or MDGA staff to influence any legislative action during a lobbying reporting period (November 1st-October 31st) and incur expenses of \$500 or more for activities excluding personal travel or subsistence expenses.
- in the presence of an elected official or MDGA staff to influence any legislative action during a lobbying reporting period and earn \$2,500 or more as compensation, from all lobbying employers cumulatively, for all communication and activities.
- not in the presence of an elected official or MDGA staff to influence any legislative action and earn \$5,000 or more from all lobbying employers cumulatively as compensation for all such communication and activities relating to the communication during a reporting period.

See: <https://ethics.maryland.gov/wp-content/uploads/filebase/lobbyists/General-Information-Lobbyists.pdf> & <https://ethics.maryland.gov/lobbyists/>

Special Note

From the MD State Ethics Commission:

“The State Ethics Commission considers that ‘in the presence’ lobbying is reserved for lobbying that occurs in the same physical presence, but lobbyists should be aware that all virtual meetings, whether they include video function or not, count toward the compensation and expense triggers of communication ‘not in the presence’ of an official or employee and would require registration under Section 5-702 of the Public Ethics Law.”

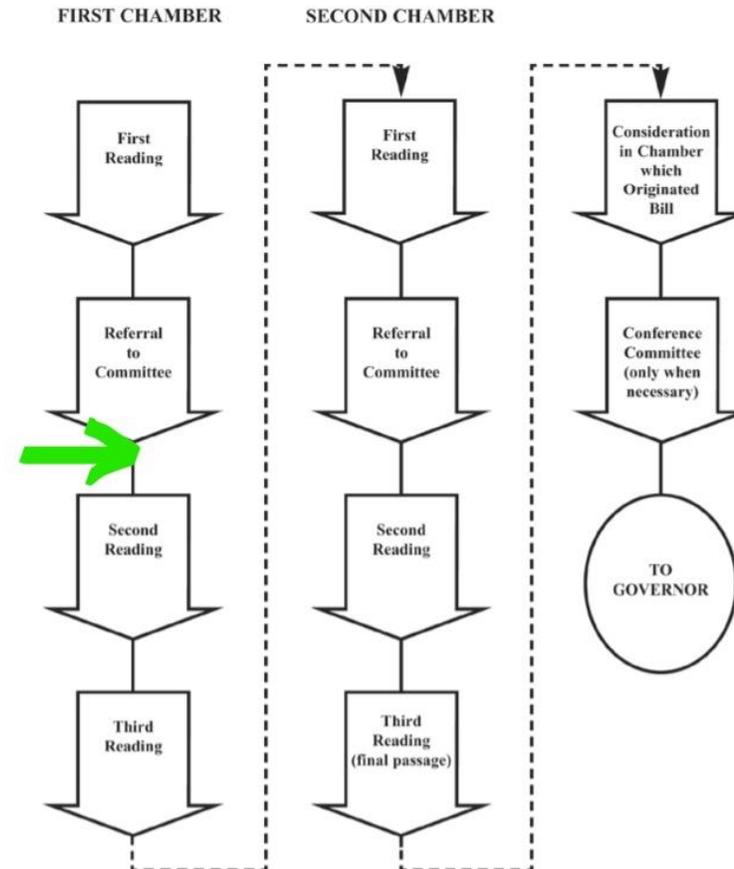
Key Components for Strategic Advocacy

1. Understand the Legislative Process
2. Context Matters
3. Zoom Out – Get the Whole Year's Perspective

Know the Process

Knowing the process
is the #1 key to
strategic
involvement!

[http://dls.maryland.gov/pubs/prod/NoPbITa
bLibResDocs/Legislative-Process.pdf](http://dls.maryland.gov/pubs/prod/NoPbITa
bLibResDocs/Legislative-Process.pdf)



Context Matters

- Budget bill is the only one that has to pass during session
- Processes are still fluid and changing
- It is much easier to stop a bill than to pass a bill. Many “good” bills take at least 3 years.
- Recognize the power of committee chairs, committee culture/dynamics, and where bills get assigned, plus dynamics and rules between chambers
- Do your research (e.g., review the bill’s history if introduced before, check primary sponsor and co-sponsors)
- 2022 is an election year – risk-taking looks different; veto overrides have different rules

Advocacy Can Be Year-Round

- January-April: 90-day session
- April-May: Legislation goes to the Governor
- June-October: Bills signed into law begin to go into effect
- Summer-Winter: Workgroups and Briefings
- August-October:
 - Budget advocacy
 - Get prospective bills on legislators' radar
- November-December:
 - Spending Affordability Committee
 - Pre-filed bills

Bonus Tips

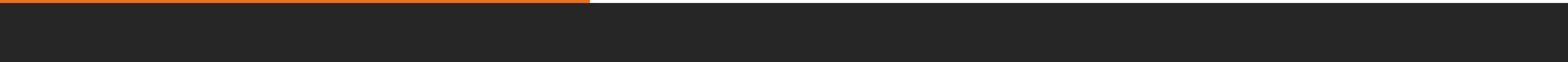
- Don't be all business all the time *and* don't be too casual
- Pay attention to patterns of behavior and advice/feedback legislators give
- Recognize the difference between accountability and shaming/cancelling
- Be equity-focused – [10 Essential Questions](#), [SHARP Framework](#); open doors and hold them open, and disrupt stereotypes
- Position yourself/your organization as a resource to legislators
- Connect with good resources/groups & maximize your influence
 - Sign up for relevant coalition/organization advocacy alerts
 - Know good news sources (e.g., Maryland Matters, Center Maryland, the Maryland Reporter)

Bonus Tips, cont.

- When in-person:
 - Get to know the “hot spots” for running into legislators
 - Bring snacks, water, etc. because there is a lot of sitting around and waiting
 - Ensure that people 18+ with you have photo IDs to get into buildings
 - Make sure you have what you need to keep phones, laptops, etc. charged
 - Have an “elevator speech” ready for when you run into legislators
- Be ready to end a meeting/interaction if it’s going sideways
- Get to know the acronyms



Using the MDGA Website

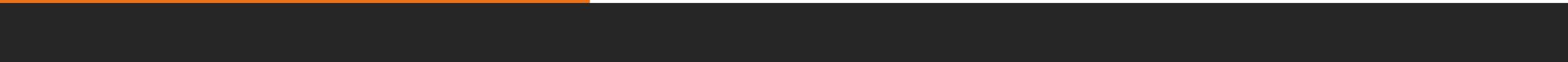


Direct Links

- Home: <https://mgaleg.maryland.gov/mgawebsite>
- Video Tutorials:
<https://mgaleg.maryland.gov/mgawebsite/Information/VideoTutorials>
- YouTube Channels to Watch Hearings:
<https://mgaleg.maryland.gov/mgawebsite/Information/YouTubeChannelInfo>



Giving Effective Testimony



Testimony Logistics

- Can be written only, verbal only, or both (you will need a MyMGA account)
- Heading should include: Bill number and title, hearing date, committee name, and position (i.e., support, support with amendments, informational, oppose)
- Use the first couple of sentences to introduce your organization
- Make it clear why the bill is important to you
- Try to keep most testimonies to one page
- The best testimonies mix stories with data (where data is available)
- Begin verbal testimony with thanking the Chair and committee for hearing your testimony, stating the organization's name, and naming the district(s) where you work and live

Testimony Strategies

- Do NOT read your testimony when giving verbal testimony; reference it, give highlights, and tell a story
- Whenever possible, build a panel that includes people directly impacted by legislation
- Determine whether signing your name or simply leaving the organization's header on testimony is more strategic
- Tell the truth with messaging that allows people to hear it
- Listen to the testimonies before you and pivot where you can
- Practice your testimony ahead of time and plan for 20-30 seconds *less* than allotted speaking time

Testimony FYIs

- Double check committee guidelines and calendars; be ready for last minute changes
- Keep in mind that testimony is public record and hearings are livestreamed/recorded
- Ask for any accommodation needs in advance via the bill sponsor and/or chair
- Legislators do ask questions – this is not like the County Council or Board of Ed
- Make sure you actually follow up in a timely manner when a request is made or you offer

For the Chat/Discussion:

- What resources would be helpful for us to add to the State Legislative Resources page?
- How are you feeling about engaging with the General Assembly compared to the start of this Lunch n Learn?

Contact

Contact us at policy@acshoco.org for a deeper dive into any information you've heard and/or for personalized consultation on developing advocacy plans, strategies, and messaging.