

# US BANKRUPTCY COURT, DISTRICT OF MASSACHUSETTS

## TELEPHONIC/VIDEOCONFERENCE HEARINGS

### Best Practices for Remote Participation in Telephonic and Videoconference Hearings

The following recommendations are made to preserve both the integrity of the hearing and recording of the hearing. If the judge cannot hear you due to issues such as technical difficulties or multiple speakers, the hearing will be impacted, and the transcriptionist will have difficulty transcribing. Just as for an in-person hearing, you should arrive early, have the information to connect tested and ready, and conduct yourself throughout as though you are physically present in the courtroom.

If you are unable to access the hearing or experience issues during the hearing, please email the Courtroom Deputy immediately.

Judge	Courtroom Deputy	Email
Chief Judge Katz	Sophia Howard	Sophia_Howard@mab.uscourts.gov
Judge Bostwick	Lisa Belanger	Lisa_Belanger@mab.uscourts.gov
Judge Panos	Alberto Barrera	Alberto_Barrera@mab.uscourts.gov

### Equipment and Setting

- **Use a landline** as it provides the optimal sound quality for both listening and speaking.
- **Do not** use the speaker phone feature on your phone or computer as it distorts the sounds for all participants.
- **Mute your line** until you are called upon to speak.
  - If you do not have a mute button on your phone;
    - Press a \*6 to mute the phone.
    - Press a \*6 to un-mute the phone to speak.
- **Headsets** – Headsets can be very useful while attending a conference call. They allow for freedom of movement, help ergonomically, and may help you hear better.
  - Note the qualities of these devices vary. Be aware of the possible sound/voice issues that may arise.
  - Be sure your headset is fully charged prior to the hearing.
- **Use of Mobile Phone When Landline Is Not Available** – Mobile phone use is possible, but not recommended.
  - Mobile phone service drops and/or static may affect the conference.
  - If you do call from a mobile phone, please avoid moving about while speaking to avoid connection issues.
  - **Do not call in from a moving vehicle.**

### Protocol for Joining the Remote Hearing

- The dress code for a virtual hearing is the same as one held in person in a courtroom.
- Verify your display name is accurate.
- Call from a quiet setting. Background noise can often be heard, making both hearing you and

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transcribing the proceedings difficult.

- Join the conference 10 minutes early for a trial or evidentiary hearing and 5 minutes early for a non-evidentiary hearing to be sure you have no technical issues.
- Upon entry into the conference space, understand there may be multiple hearings taking place. Immediately mute your phone/microphone and wait until your case is called to identify yourself.
- For videoconference hearings, turn off your camera until you are asked to turn it on.
- When your case is called, please state your name and affiliation.
- Attorneys should indicate to the Courtroom Deputy both if their client joins the call and that the client understands the client is in “listen only” mode.
- The Courtroom Deputy may either initiate a verbal roll call or electronically via the conference platform.

### During the Remote Hearing

- Conduct yourself in a manner appropriate for the courtroom.
- Do not interrupt.
  - Interruptions delay the hearing and make transcribing difficult.
- ***When you hear the judge speaking, please stop talking so that the judge can ask a question or otherwise direct the hearing.***
- Speak clearly and pause frequently when delivering complicated material.
  - Try to speak naturally.
- Identify yourself each time you speak.
- Notify the Courtroom Deputy if you are having technical issues as soon as they arise to avoid issues with the judge and/or transcriptionist understanding the proceedings.
- When not speaking, mute your phone/microphone to avoid extraneous sounds.
  - Extraneous sounds are distracting to hearing proceedings.
  - If you do not have a mute button on your phone
    - Press a \*6 to mute the phone.
    - Press a \*6 to un-mute the lines to speak.
- Do not join a second call from a second phone.
- Never place the call on hold before, during, or after the hearing.
  - You may be called upon at any moment in the proceeding.
  - Background music may interrupt other hearings.

### Leaving the Remote Hearing

- Do not hang up until the hearing is adjourned or the Court indicates that your presence is no longer necessary.