



## Maryland Developmental Disabilities Council

CREATING CHANGE • IMPROVING LIVES

### House Health and Government Operations Committee

February 8, 2023

### HB 264: Places of Public Accommodation – Motion Picture Houses - Captioning

Position: Support

The Maryland Developmental Disabilities Council (Council) is an independent, public policy organization that creates changes to make it possible for people with developmental disabilities to live the lives they want with the support they need. Our vision is that people with and without disabilities in Maryland live, learn, work, and play together. HB 264 is another change needed to make that happen. **It benefits everyone and takes another important step to ensure more Marylanders enjoy movies.**

➤ Maryland already requires captions for television. HB 264 expands those requirements to movie theaters.

#### WHAT does this legislation do?

- It requires movie theaters (a place of public accommodation) to provide closed caption technology for each screening of a movie for the public. Closed captions provide individual viewers a transcript of the audio portion of a movie if they choose to access it on a device provided by the theater.
- It also requires companies that own at least two movie theaters in Maryland to provide open captions for each movie it screens twice a week minimum. Open captions provide all viewers access to captions.

#### WHY is this legislation important?

- **Video captions benefit everyone.** Multiple studies have found that captioned videos increase comprehension, attention, and memory for everyone: children, youth, and adults.
- **Captions benefit people with disabilities.** People with disabilities are a growing population. Captions benefit individuals who are Deaf and Hard of Hearing, but also people with other communication disabilities such as sensory processing disorder. Captions allow these groups to access movies in real time and with the same socially integrated experiences of others.
- **Captions benefit people for whom English is not their first language.** English language acquisition is an important goal for many Marylanders and watching films with captions raises literacy rates and improves pronunciation for second-language learners.
- **Captions benefit children and adults learning to read.** Films with captions have a positive impact on reading and vocabulary skills of children, youth, and adults.
- **Making recreation accessible to everyone is a fundamental practice of inclusion.** The Americans with Disabilities Act and subsequent DOJ rulings have required captions in most workplaces and education settings. However, federal regulation does not yet require captioning in movie theaters.

**It is critical that people with disabilities have full access to every mode of communication and recreational option available, including movies. For these reasons, the Council supports HB 264.**

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