

Good afternoon, Chair Smith, Vice Chair Waldstreicher, and the Committee My name is Fred Hartman. I am proudly representing our community in the great State of Maryland.

Please allow me to give you a brief history of the device problems that people are experiencing.

As you know, in the movie theaters, we often use these types of equipment: Sony captioning glasses and CaptiView devices that attach to your seat's cupholder. Yes, we experience issues with the devices so often that we have to deal with the manager or the guest desk to resolve the issue and we miss the portion of the movie.

Captions through glasses are small on the device which we have to focus on and can cause some pain and headache for people. Also, the glasses are not fit for all. People who wear glasses often say it is uncomfortable and/or heavy for them. Children cannot wear that because it is too big for them.

Another issue using this device, CaptiView, is that we often have to look up and down which is not a great experience for us. Not only that, this device doesn't stick in the cupholder properly. The most common problems among the devices are battery failure, lack of connectivity, or sporadic connectivity that leads to dropped dialogue. It is very frustrating for us because that is a potential violation of the Americans with Disabilities Act. To avoid that is to have open captioning movies in the movie theaters. That will allow us to enjoy the movie with the peace of having equal access.

Yes, the movie theaters often give us a free voucher or a refund when we experience an issue, but that does not satisfy us enough because other people will experience the same issue.

It should be noted that on Friday, January 20th of this year, Academy Award winner Marlee Matlin and other Sundance Film Festival jurors walked out of the premiere when they were provided with a malfunctioned closed captioning device.

There are times when people want to enjoy going to the movie theater with family and friends. Oftentimes, there are not enough closed-caption devices at the movie theater. So, part of the group has to sacrifice and not use the device.

The solution to that is having an Open Captioning Movie at the theater! We can enjoy it together as a family and friends and have a fun night!

Again, Open Captioning is for everyone and also benefits 6.2 million people in the State of Maryland. Not to mention but Gallaudet University is in our backyard and can attract them over to the State to watch the movie!

I am asking you to please pass this bill so that we all can enjoy the same fair access smoothly.

Thank you for listening to me and for your continued support of this important equal access bill.