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January 30, 2024

Chairperson Delegate C.T. Wilson
Economic Matters Committee
231 Taylor House Office Building
6 Bladen Street
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

RE: Support of HB 426

Dear Chairperson Wilson and Economic Matters Committee members,

My name is John A. Serrano and I submit this letter as a representative of the Maryland School for the Deaf in my capacity as the school superintendent. The intention of this letter is to express my support for HB 426 which requires all movie theaters to offer movies with open captioning on an ongoing basis.

As a Deaf individual currently working in the role of educating Deaf/Hard of Hearing students from the state of Maryland, I can attest that we depend on closed captioning for full access. Growing up as a Deaf individual, it has been a privilege to see the positive impact the American with Disabilities Act (ADA), a landmark federal legislation, as well as the numerous technological advancements have had on ensuring accessibility for disabled groups including the Deaf/Hard of Hearing community. A significant part of the impact on accessibility for Deaf/Hard of Hearing and those with hearing loss, was the implementation of closed captioning in movies, television shows and more recently, streaming movies/shows. Requiring open captioning at public movie theaters would be a small yet significant leap toward ensuring equitable access for everyone, especially the Deaf/hard of Hearing population in Maryland. Our Deaf/Hard of Hearing students should be afforded the same opportunity as other children to watch movies in movie theaters at any given time. After all, the core principles of the American with Disabilities Act is to give equitable accessibility and opportunities for all disabled people including Deaf/Hard of Hearing people, and this bill aligns with those core principles.

For these reasons and more, I hope you will consider your support for HB 426. Thank you for your continued work.

Sincerely,

John A. Serrano
Superintendent, Maryland School for the Deaf