



People On the Go of Maryland

HB 426

**Places of Public Accommodation -
Motion Picture Houses - Captioning**

Requiring all motion picture houses to offer closed captioning for each screening of a motion picture; and requiring a place of public accommodation that controls, operates, owns, or leases at least two motion picture houses in the State to provide open captioning for at least two screenings each week.

Position: Support

February 2, 2024

Sponsored by Delegate Bhandari

Assigned to Economic Matters

Written by Mat Rice

People On the Go of Maryland

Honorable chairperson, and distinguished members of the Judicial Proceedings Committee:

People On the Go of Maryland (POG) is a statewide self-advocacy organization, ran for and by those with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities (IDD) and our mission is to promote self-advocacy throughout the state. In furtherance of that mission, we believe in equal access to community resources; and that all people have the right to live, work, love, and play in the communities of their choosing, regardless of whether or not they have a disability or significant support needs.

People On the Go is pleased to provide this written testimony in support of House Bill 426 (HB 426). We support this bill because:

- It establishes a requirement for motion picture houses throughout the state (more commonly known as movie theaters), to offer a minimum of two showings per week which provide open-captioning access.
- This benefits those who are Deaf and hard of hearing, as well as others who might need to read a description of what is happening in a movie, versus relying purely on being able to see the scenes in the film.
- POG does not agree with the objection that this could negatively affect attendance at movie theaters. The legislation only specifies a minimum of two showings per week.
- Movie-goers could choose whether to see a standard-format show or a captioned show — just as they can choose from the many other formats now being offered, to attract and increase movie theater attendance (Dolby Cinema, RealD 3D, IMAX, etc.).
- Movie theaters are already offering many other perks such as being able to choose your seating, and what kind of concessions you can buy. It is a simple matter to flip a switch to enable captioning at a movie showing. It would benefit a large population segment of individuals who either need captioning themselves, or support such individuals.
- Without this service, this segment of the community could decide to just stay home and stream a movie with their own television's accessibility controls enabled. With such a service, the hearing and visually-impaired can participate in the community experience of seeing a movie, help small businesses, and stimulate the economy throughout the state of Maryland.

For these reasons, People On the Go advises a favorable report for HB 426. Thank you for your consideration.

Should you have any questions. Please contact Mat Rice.

Thank you,

Mat Rice, Executive Director

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