



**Maryland Association of the Deaf
Written Testimony**

**HB 426 – Places of Public Accommodation - Motion Picture Houses - Captioning
Tuesday, February 6, 2024**

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The Maryland Association of the Deaf (MDAD) is a statewide organization that protects the interests of Deaf, DeafBlind, and Hard of Hearing Marylanders concerning accessibility and equity issues. We are advocating for the passage of the HB 264 sponsored by Delegate Bhandari regarding movie theater captioning. There are approximately 1.2 million Deaf, DeafBlind, and Hard of Hearing individuals living in the State of Maryland. Therefore, it is imperative that the State of Maryland take the lead in requiring movie theaters to provide on-screen captioning accessibility.

NATO (National Association of Theatre Owners) has proven over and over that their promises and excuses have literally fallen on “deaf ears” in dictating when and where captioned movie technology should be shown based on their perception of movie going audiences. This is a practice that has proven to be problematic for many Deaf, DeafBlind, and Hard of Hearing patrons.

The current closed captioning (CC) technology in the State of Maryland movie theaters are inconvenient to have to return and give some people headaches having to move their heads up and down from screen to device and focusing on the device. These caption boxes or glasses either break down in the middle of a movie or the battery dies, necessitating Deaf, Hard of Hearing movie patrons having to leave the theater and missing part of the movie to get a replacement. This is not acceptable. With the broken equipment, it is not an effective way to have equal access as others.

Open Captioning (OC), in contrast, are better suited to movie enjoyment, less prone to failure and enable us to remain invisible and maintain our dignity, while also benefiting a wider segment of the public (children, seniors, the Deaf, those learning English as a second language, etc.).

We look forward to a favorable report on HB 426.

Thank you,

MDAD Board of Directors