

2/1/24

Dear Maryland Legislature:

I am writing to express my support on behalf of HASA, Maryland's only nonprofit organization providing interpreting services, for HB 426 and SB 92 - the Open Captioning Movie Bill, sponsored by Delegate Harry Bhandari and Senator Benjamin Brooks. This bill proposes the requirement for movie theaters to include onscreen captions for all movies at least two times per week, with the aim of enhancing accessibility for moviegoers.

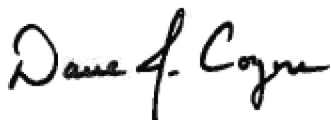
HASA connects people to their worlds and aids individuals in their ability to understand and to be understood. We firmly believe that everyone deserves the implementation of onscreen captioning for movies and that this access would be highly beneficial to a wide range of individuals. This includes those who are deaf, hard of hearing, neurodivergent, learning to read, learning English, and/or elderly. Moreover, even hearing individuals find captions beneficial.

Presently, the mandated technologies such as glasses or "cup holder" devices can be challenging to use and do not provide an optimal or adequate viewing experience for users. These devices require moviegoers to simultaneously view the movie and the captions, which can be cumbersome. Additionally, some individuals may feel uncomfortable disclosing their disability to the theater. By featuring onscreen captioning at least twice a week, all moviegoers would have the opportunity to fully comprehend the dialogue of the movies they watch. This mirrors the millions of people who rely on onscreen captioning when watching television at home.

Therefore, we fully support HB 426 and SB 92 and hope that these bills progress further. Their enactment would enable a broader audience to fully experience and enjoy movies in Maryland, benefiting residents, visitors, and movie theaters alike.

Thank you for your consideration of these comments.

Sincerely,



Dr. Dave Coyne, Language Access and Inclusion Director