



Testimony of Robert Schwartz/ Regal Cinemas in OPPOSITION To House Bill 426 - Places of  
Accommodation - Motion Picture Houses—Captioning  
Before the House Economic Matters Committee  
February 6, 2024  
POSITION: Unfavorable

Dear Chairman Wilson, Vice-Chair Crosby, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Robert Schwartz and I am one of 2 District Manager for Regal Cinemas overseeing operations in Maryland, Pennsylvania, and West Virginia. Regal Cinemas operates ten theatres with 145 screens in Maryland. It should be noted that Regal had to close three of its Maryland theaters during the summer of 2023 due to the struggles related to the pandemic recovery and the recent strikes affecting film production.

As a company, serving all audiences is integral to our financial success. We feature a diverse array of film product ranging from blockbuster movies to independent films, as well as foreign features. Our intention is to serve as wide an audience as possible, including members of the deaf and hard-of-hearing community.

We respectfully oppose Bill 426, as a one-size fits all approach through a legislative mandate does not adequately meet the needs of each community in the state. However, we fully recommend and support voluntary programs focused on the demands of each market. We believe that collaboration instead of legislation works best.

All ten of our Maryland sites currently play open caption titles upon advance guest request. Furthermore, we schedule open caption shows daily at several of our Maryland locations. Each week our top three films are selected as part of the program. Our open caption showtimes include primetime weekend options. While we are proud to offer these performances, we are very concerned that formal mandates through legislation would have a negative financial impact on our business by eliminating flexibility in accommodating actual demand within the marketplace.

In addition to proactively providing open caption performances both scheduled and on demand, we offer several technologies and private rentals to further accommodate our guests. All our locations are equipped with assisted listening headphones to amplify the audio, and closed captioning devices to allow guests to see captions in their field of view without affecting others. Additionally, our Private Watch Party program allows guests, even in small groups, to rent an entire auditorium to enjoy a movie of their choice.

In summary, our goal is to attract as many people to patronize our theatres as much as possible. It is in our best interest to engage and accommodate our deaf and hard-of-hearing guests but mandating open captioning across the board will limit our ability to best serve actual demand in our community. As such, we respectfully ask that you give HB426 an unfavorable report and allow us to continue with the voluntary program we have in place.

We appreciate the opportunity to share our thoughts.

Thank you,

Robert Schwartz  
District Manager

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