



WE MAKE MOVIES BETTER™

February 2, 2024

**Maryland House Bill 426 – Places of Public Accommodation - Motion Picture Houses –
Captioning
Before the House Economic Matters Committee
Position: Oppose**

On behalf of AMC Theatres, the largest theatrical exhibitor in the State of Maryland and the United States, we respectfully request that you oppose HB 426. Since AMC is already providing open caption showtimes voluntarily and complies with federal law on accessibility, this legislation is unnecessary.

Inclusive programming is core to AMC's strategy, and we are proud to lead the theatrical exhibition industry by making open caption showtimes available in the state of Maryland. Currently, guests at 7 AMC locations within the state can find clearly marked open caption showtimes at AMCTheaters.com and on the AMC mobile app. The showtimes currently represent a mix of weekend and weekdays, evenings, and matinees, and are expected to evolve with movie-going demand and guest feedback.

In addition to public showtimes, open captions are also available through AMC's Private Theatre Rentals program and group open caption requests. While AMC is excited to offer open captioning for those guests who desire this format, substantially all showtimes at AMC will continue to be offered with closed captioning, which allows audience members to attend all shows at every time without any disruption in ticket sales. Therefore, AMC will continue to have closed captioning and assisted listening devices available at all its locations in the state.

By allowing AMC to offer open caption showings on a voluntary basis, rather than a mandated basis, it allows us to react to actual demand and adjust the number of screenings and the showtimes as appropriate. There are a number of reasons that moviegoers elect not to see open caption movie showings. Open captions can be distracting to some viewers who do not require them. The text displayed at the bottom of the screen can draw the eye away from the main action and dialogue, disrupting the immersive experience of watching a film. Some people find open captions to be visually cluttered. The text at the bottom of the screen can cover up other on-screen elements, such as artistic details or crucial visual cues. Lastly, everyone has different sensory preferences. Some individuals may have sensitivities to visual stimuli or text, making open captions uncomfortable or even overwhelming for them to watch. For this reason, many open caption shows have largely empty audiences. To mandate an increase in the number of OC showings offered, without showing a matching demand, is financially detrimental to the industry.

The convergence of multiple issues—strikes, pandemic recovery, and industry-wide uncertainty—has created a perfect storm that threatens to undermine the financial progress theaters have made post-pandemic. Our industry remains under significant pressure, which has led Regal, the 2nd largest global movie theater chain to file for chapter 11 bankruptcy and we have seen Pacific Arlight and New Vision liquidated in bankruptcy. As we economically recover as an industry, flexibility in scheduling is paramount. Passage of this open caption legislation will add an additional obstacle to the recovery of the industry and possibly result in the closure of more theaters.

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In conclusion, we believe that our voluntary open caption program meets consumer demand as opposed to a rigid mandate that would be economically damaging and unnecessary. Therefore, we respectfully request that you oppose this legislation.

Sincerely,

Derek Hein

On behalf of AMC Theatres

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