

April 5, 2022

Judicial Proceedings Committee
State Capitol
Annapolis, MD 21401

Dear Judicial Proceedings Committee:

My name is Lisa Dewing and I am Hearing. I live in Montgomery County.

I am writing to ask you to support **HB 1238**- Open Captioning Bill, sponsored by Delegate Harry Bhandari. This bill will require all motion picture houses to offer closed captions for each screening of a motion picture. It also will require that motion picture houses provide open captioning for at least certain screenings each week.

Captioning, also known as same-language subtitles, benefits everyone who watches videos (children, adolescents, college students, and adults). More than 100 empirical studies document that captioning a video improves comprehension of, attention to, and memory for the video. Captions are particularly beneficial for persons watching videos in their non-native language, for children and adults learning to read, and for persons who are D/deaf or hard of hearing.

Most importantly, the bill provides communities with the assurance and peace of mind that they have access to the movie without using devices or other methods same as other people who go to the movie.

My personal story is I am hearing but my husband is deaf. Just last night, our 13-year-old son wanted to go to the movies with his friends. They wanted to go to a certain theater because they wanted to be able to walk around the nearby shops afterwards or go to Starbucks. Other friends were going to that theater as well. But that theater is infamous for their captioning devices never working properly. We constantly miss half of the movie (or sometimes all of it), while they struggle to get it working. So my husband had to force them to go to a different theater where they have caption glasses which are a little more reliable. Even then, he gets a headache looking at the captions through the glasses but it is the only way to have access to the film.

Open captions do no harm to anyone- they only benefit. And they benefit even people that are not deaf or hard of hearing. They enhance literacy for younger people. They help allow hearing people to catch words or phrases that they may have missed in the movie due to loud noises from special effects and such. The films are already coded with captions, so it doesn't cost the theater anything to just turn them on and have them display on the screen.

Yes, some moviegoers may find it a distraction at first but if the whole state implements it and it becomes the norm, they will get used to it, just like every other hearing person who started living with a deaf person like I did. :)

Thank you for your time and attention to this important matter and I appreciate your support on HB 1238.

Sincerely,

Lisa Dewing
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