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HB 1238 – Places of Accommodation – Motion Picture Houses - Captioning

Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee

April 5, 2022

Position: Unfavorable

My name is David Phillips and I am the Chief Operating Officer of RC Theatres. R/C Theatres is a small 3rd generation family owned Maryland Company. It was started in the 1920's with the Leader Theatre in Baltimore and is presently owned by the founder's grandson, Scott R. Cohen. R/C maintains its corporate office in Maryland, employees over 100 Marylanders and operates theatres in Westminster, Arbutus and California MD.

I am concerned that this bill will be detrimental to our business and does not reflect the programming demand of our consumers. Recently an open caption trailer was accidentally scheduled on one of our films, sending someone out to the lobby asking if there was something wrong with the presentation; not wanting or expecting subtitles on the screen. Even with best efforts to inform our guests, we worry that open caption shows will result in negative experiences and stifled ticket sales.

As written, the bill would require at least two open caption shows per film each week. This one-size-fits-all mandate would not reflect the demand for open captioning at our Maryland theatres; and would prove challenging to schedule for films held over for just a show or two per day, as well as specialty programs that may play only once or twice in any given week.. If this bill passes, I fear it will hurt our recovery through lower attendance, a decline in ticket sales, and negative customer feedback.

We appreciate and welcome our deaf and hard of hearing patrons, and already provide closed captioning devices that give these guests the opportunity to attend any movie, at any time. In addition, we are able to schedule open caption shows upon request through the Accessibility page on our website (<https://www.rctheatres.com/page?id=12302>). As a company, in our many years of operation in Maryland, we have received so few requests they could be counted on one hand.

Please continue to give us the flexibility to respond to our guest requests and market demands, rather than a one-size-fits-all legislated mandate that will seriously impact ticket sales and impede our recovery.

Respectfully,

David Phillips, COO