

April 5, 2022

Judicial Proceedings Committee
State Capitol
Annapolis, MD 21401

Dear Judicial Proceedings Committee:

My name is Michele Westfall and I am Deaf. I live in Frederick 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 captioning for each screening of a motion picture; and require that certain motion picture houses provide open captioning for at least two 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 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.

I'm Deaf, but I am also a mother of two Deaf children. My children and I love to go to see captioned movies--I have taught my children that their access is important and should never be shortchanged or dismissed. We have the right to know what is being said on screen, and the failure of theaters to consistently provide captioning is akin to censorship. Do the right thing and ensure that we have access to movies! It's a no-brainer.

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

Sincerely,

Michele Westfall
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