

Wes Moore
Governor

Aruna Miller
Lt. Governor



Usherla DeBerry
Acting Director

**HB 426 MOTION PICTURE HOUSES - CAPTIONING
SB 92 MOTION PICTURE HOUSES - CAPTIONING**

**MARYLAND GOVERNOR'S OFFICE OF THE DEAF
AND HARD OF HEARING**

ACTING DIRECTOR USHERLA DEBERRY, Ed.S.

HOUSE ECONOMIC MATTERS
Delegate C.T. Wilson, Chair
Delegate Brian M. Crosby, Vice Chair
February 6, 2024

SENATE JUDICIAL PROCEEDINGS
Senator William C. Smith, Jr., Chair
Senator Jeff Waldstreicher, Vice Chair
February 8, 2024

Good afternoon, Chair and distinguished members of the committee, my name is Usherla DeBerry. I am honored to be here on behalf of the Governor's Office of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (ODHH) as its acting director to provide testimony to support the caption bill. As one of the many Hard of Hearing Marylanders, I rely on captioning to watch the movies.

This legislation requires movie theaters that provide closed captioning to also provide open captioned movies twice a week. Open captions are an inclusive experience for all to share together regardless of their hearing or other language access needs. Closed captions are not inclusive. When individual caption devices fail, the user is excluded from the experience thus leading to further isolation or disillusionment from their peers.

Based on Johns Hopkins population projections in 2016 approximately 1.2 million people 12 years of age and older reside in Maryland. Due to centuries long stigmas around hearing loss, not as many people are willing to disclose their hearing loss to others. Most particularly the age related

loss. Some may choose to isolate themselves from others or to cruise through group conversations assenting to what others said without accessing all the information available to them. Bonding over shared experiences is important for one's health.

Captions are a universal design. And bonding with family and friends. Young children will be able to read the captioned text as part of their literacy. For people whose English may be their second or third language will benefit from both reading and listening to the dialogues and sound effects. Those who have auditory processing disorders will be able to follow the movie. Some neurodivergent children and adults rely on captioning.

Please support this bill for inclusivity of all. Thank you.