January 29, 2024

Judicial Proceedings Committee
2 East
Miller Senate Office Building
State Capitol
Annapolis, MD 21401

Dear the Judicial Proceedings Committee:

Deaf In Government (DIG), a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization, serves as a support group for local, state, and federal employees who are deaf or hard of hearing and as a resource for government entities. On behalf of our members who are Maryland residents, DIG supports the passage of the Open Captioning Movie Bill HB 426 and SB 92 regarding movie theater captioning.

The current closed captioning (CC) technology in Maryland movie theaters are often not maintained which leads to the caption boxes or glasses to either break down in the middle of a movie or the battery dies, necessitating Deaf, Hard of Hearing movie patrons having to leave the theater and missing part of the movie. Additionally, these devices are inaccessible for some deaf people with vision or physical impairments who are unable to use them. With the broken and inaccessible equipment, this is not an effective, inclusive way to provide an equitable movie going experience.

National Association of Theatre Owners and the movie theaters are only tracking the numbers of paid admission tickets, not the number of people who leave the movie before it ends, or the number of vouchers given out to return another time. This lack of a complaint system is one that has proven to be problematic for many Deaf, DeafBlind, and Hard of Hearing patrons.

Open Captioning (OC), in contrast, is better suited to an equitable movie going experience, less prone to failure, costs nothing, and enables deaf and hard of hearing theater patrons to participate in the experience, while also benefiting a wider segment of the public (children, seniors, the Deaf, those learning English as a second language, etc.).

We ask for your vote in support of the Open Captioning Movie Bill HB 426 and SB 92.

Thank you,

Deaf In Government

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