

HB426 PLACES OF PUBLIC ACCOMMODATION - MOTION PICTURE HOUSES - CAPTIONING
SB92 PLACES OF PUBLIC ACCOMMODATION - MOTION PICTURE HOUSES – CAPTIONING

TESTIMONY OF
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CHIEF STRATEGY OFFICER
SERVICE COORDINATION, INC.

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

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

Greetings Chair and distinguished members of the committee. My name is Kelby Brick. I am Chief Strategy Officer of Service Coordination, Inc. (SCI).

SCI is a leading non-profit organization providing award-winning case management services and advocacy for more than 15,000 individuals with disabilities, medically complex needs, older adults, and others across Maryland, the District of Columbia, and Northern Virginia. SCI's mission is to help people understand their choices and create pathways to community resources that respect their dignity and rights. The organization also provides companion care and aging life care management through Montcordia.

The current bills under consideration would require movie theaters to offer open captioned movies on a limited basis. This is an important step toward achieving the principles of accessibility and inclusivity, making the cinematic experience accessible to a broader audience.

By mandating captioning in movie theaters, this legislation would contribute to breaking down barriers and fostering a more inclusive society. It acknowledges the diverse needs of our state.

Best of all, this commonsense bill costs both the state and movie houses absolutely nothing! How many times can you make the claim that you passed a civil rights legislation that costs absolutely nothing for anybody and yet is transformational? This is the bill.

I think there is nothing more powerful than hearing directly from constituents. The next page has a list of quotes from constituents across the state. Those quotes express the frustration, anguish and struggles of those individuals who are excluded from movie houses. As a Deaf person, I obviously share and identify with their sentiments.

Please support and pass this bill this year to protect consumers while advancing their civil rights.

Thank you.

QUOTES FROM CONSTITUENTS

“Everyone deserves to go to the movies and enjoy the cinematic experience. Nobody should be dealing with a broken cupholder device with a crazy bendy pole. If you already wear glasses, then you have to put on those big bulky glasses on top of them in order to see the closed captions? Uncomfortable, I tell ya! Or if the CC device doesn’t work and you miss some of the movie because you have to go to the lobby to get a new one?” *Nyle DiMarco, Maryland School for the Deaf graduate, winner of America's Next Top Model, and winner of Dancing with the Stars.*

“Because of my hearing loss due to age, I miss a lot of information. OC helps me enjoy the movie like others do.” *JoAnn, Baltimore City*

“As a neurodivergent person, it is difficult to focus on or process so many noisy background sounds and music. Seeing OCs make my theatre experience far more fulfilling and enjoyable.” *Gabi, Baltimore County*

“Hearing companions see my frustrations with the CC devices and shake their heads in pity. In short, Deaf moviegoers are treated as fourth-class citizens but being charged first-class ticket prices.” *Vikki, Montgomery County*

“Theaters do not care about our community. They know they can get away with it because the state allows it. This is an easy bipartisan win for legislators...” *Shane & Julie, Howard County*

“OC not only helps with accessibility, but also fundamental reading, like they did for my children. Even my own literacy skills improved with OC.” *Arlyn, Prince George’s County*

“I no longer attend cinema where CC devices are utilized, due to demeaning technical issues in their use. The ONLY functional equivalent is open captions. I will not spend my money at cinema otherwise.” *Kenneth, Kent County*

“With more open captioned movies, a lot more people would be more open to going to the movies.” *Leyland, Anne Arundel County*

“The first time seeing a movie with OC in the theater, I learned new words, phrases, and context. OC helps with learning language.” – *Smita, Montgomery County*

“I received partially charged or dead CC devices that prevented me from having enjoyable experiences with my family and friends.” *Wesley, St. Mary’s County*

“Open Captioning is a crucial step toward making entertainment accessible to all. OC also helps create a more inclusive environment – increasing attendance and revenue for movie theater owners.” *Randy, Howard County*

“I would love to take my Hard of Hearing husband and two daughters to the theaters and watch OC movies...without forcing my children, my husband, and myself to wear or carry around those ridiculous CC devices.” *Meredith, Carroll County*

“As parents, we haven’t been to a theater in years...OC movies would be a game-changer for our family!” *Tara, Frederick County*

“Our entire family is Deaf, and we enjoy going to the movies together, which is a family value. However, that family value is dictated by a system that does not include [us]. Please pass the OC bill.” *Dawn, Washington County*