

March 4, 2025

Economic Matters Committee
State Capitol
Annapolis, MD 21401

Dear Economic Matters Committee:

My name is Michele Westfall and I am Deaf. I live in Frederick County.

I am writing to request your support for **HB 1363 – Places of Public Accommodation – Captioning for Motion Picture Houses – Alterations**, sponsored by Delegate Harry Bhandari. This bill requires certain motion picture houses with fewer than eight screens to provide open captioning for at least two screenings each week.

Captioning, also known as same-language subtitles, is beneficial to everyone who watches videos, including children, adolescents, college students, and adults. Over 100 empirical studies have shown that captioning improves comprehension, attention, and retention of the material. Captioning is especially valuable for people watching videos in a non-native language, for children and adults learning to read, and for individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing.

Most importantly, this bill ensures that communities can enjoy equal access to movies without needing devices or other methods, just as others do when attending a film.

I'm blessed to live in Frederick because it has two movie theaters that regularly provide open captioned movies which my children, my friends and I enjoy, and I'm sad that it's not the case in other counties.

Thank you for your time and attention to this important matter. I appreciate your support of HB 1363.

Sincerely,

Michele Westfall
fuzzyw5@yahoo.com

March 4, 2025

Economic Matters Committee
State Capitol
Annapolis, MD 21401

Dear Economic Matters Committee:

My name is Katie White and I am Hearing with a neurodivergent, auditory processing disorder, or similar medical condition. I live in Anne Arundel County.

I am writing to request your support for **HB 1363 – Places of Public Accommodation – Captioning for Motion Picture Houses – Alterations**, sponsored by Delegate Harry Bhandari. This bill requires certain motion picture houses with fewer than eight screens to provide open captioning for at least two screenings each week.

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Most importantly, this bill ensures that communities can enjoy equal access to movies without needing devices or other methods, just as others do when attending a film.

As someone who has difficulty processing audio, especially while watching movies or TV shows, having captions is immensely helpful. The times I have gone to a theater with open captions, I've been able to follow along and pay better attention to the movie. Having this option available more often will get me out to the movies more as well.

Thank you for your time and attention to this important matter. I appreciate your support of HB 1363.

Sincerely,

Katie White
kewwhite598@gmail.com

March 4, 2025

Economic Matters Committee
State Capitol
Annapolis, MD 21401

Dear Economic Matters Committee:

My name is Mary Anne White, and I am Deaf. I live in Prince George's County.

I am writing to request your support for **HB 1363 – Places of Public Accommodation – Captioning for Motion Picture Houses – Alterations**, sponsored by Delegate Harry Bhandari. This bill requires certain motion picture houses with fewer than eight screens to provide open captioning for at least two screenings each week.

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Most importantly, this bill ensures that communities can enjoy equal access to movies without needing devices or other methods, just as others do when attending a film.

Thank you for your time and attention to this important matter. I appreciate your support of HB 1363.

Sincerely,

Mary Anne White
maryannewhite54@gmail.com

March 4, 2025

Economic Matters Committee
State Capitol
Annapolis, MD 21401

Dear Economic Matters Committee:

My name is Brenda Williams and I am Hard of Hearing.

I am writing to request your support for **HB 1363 – Places of Public Accommodation – Captioning for Motion Picture Houses – Alterations**, sponsored by Delegate Harry Bhandari. This bill requires certain motion picture houses with fewer than eight screens to provide open captioning for at least two screenings each week.

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Most importantly, this bill ensures that communities can enjoy equal access to movies without needing devices or other methods, just as others do when attending a film.

I want to highlight the importance of open captions in movie theaters. While some theaters offer personal captioning devices, these devices are often unreliable—frequently uncharged, malfunctioning, or uncomfortable to use. This creates a frustrating and exclusionary experience for people like me who simply want to enjoy a film without added barriers.

Open captions provide an accessible, seamless experience for individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing, as well as many others, including those with auditory processing disorders and non-native English speakers. By increasing the availability of open-caption screenings, Maryland can set a standard for inclusivity and ensure that everyone has equal access to the cinematic experience.

I urge you to pass legislation that would require or incentivize more open-caption showings in movie theaters across the state.

Thank you for your time and attention to this important matter. I appreciate your support of HB 1363.

Sincerely,

Brenda Williams
Bwilliams071488@gmail.com

March 4, 2025

Economic Matters Committee
State Capitol
Annapolis, MD 21401

Dear Economic Matters Committee:

My name is Judy Williams and I am Deaf. I live in Prince George's County.

I am writing to request your support for **HB 1363 – Places of Public Accommodation – Captioning for Motion Picture Houses – Alterations**, sponsored by Delegate Harry Bhandari. This bill requires certain motion picture houses with fewer than eight screens to provide open captioning for at least two screenings each week.

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Most importantly, this bill ensures that communities can enjoy equal access to movies without needing devices or other methods, just as others do when attending a film.

I've been Deaf since birth and a Maryland resident for 15 years. I have two wonderful hearing children who watch TV and movies with closed captions (CC) 100% of the time. They're very accustomed to it, to the point where they find it strange if CC isn't on! We love going to the movie theater as a family treat, but they notice that even in the theater, we're separated by our access. The kids miss the words on the screen, and I either have to sit awkwardly with a plastic screen in front of me or wear big, heavy glasses. We would love to be able to pick a movie, go in, sit wherever we like, and share the same movie screen experience!

Thank you for your time and attention to this important matter. I appreciate your support of HB 1363.

Sincerely,

Jody Williams
Jodydb@gmail.com

March 4, 2025

Economic Matters Committee
State Capitol
Annapolis, MD 21401

Dear Economic Matters Committee:

My name is Elsie Winters and I am Deaf. I live in Kent County.

I am writing to request your support for **HB 1363 – Places of Public Accommodation – Captioning for Motion Picture Houses – Alterations**, sponsored by Delegate Harry Bhandari. This bill requires certain motion picture houses with fewer than eight screens to provide open captioning for at least two screenings each week.

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Most importantly, this bill ensures that communities can enjoy equal access to movies without needing devices or other methods, just as others do when attending a film.

Although I now have a cochlear implant, I rely one hundred percent on captioned programs on TV and on movies. Most news stations are captioned and without that, I would not have any indication of what is news other than what I read online. I hope this service continues.

Thank you for your time and attention to this important matter. I appreciate your support of HB 1363.

Sincerely,

Elsie Winters
kentco4@yahoo.com

March 4, 2025

Economic Matters Committee
State Capitol
Annapolis, MD 21401

Dear Economic Matters Committee:

My name is Marcia Zisman and I am Deaf. I live in Montgomery County.

I am writing to request your support for **HB 1363 – Places of Public Accommodation – Captioning for Motion Picture Houses – Alterations**, sponsored by Delegate Harry Bhandari. This bill requires certain motion picture houses with fewer than eight screens to provide open captioning for at least two screenings each week.

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Most importantly, this bill ensures that communities can enjoy equal access to movies without needing devices or other methods, just as others do when attending a film.

I love watching movies but am limited in what I can view due to lack of open captions.

Thank you for your time and attention to this important matter. I appreciate your support of HB 1363.

Sincerely,

Marcia Zisman
mzisman270@aol.com

March 4, 2025

Economic Matters Committee
State Capitol
Annapolis, MD 21401

Dear Economic Matters Committee:

My name is Lauren Zummo, and I am Hearing. I live in Frederick County.

I am writing to request your support for **HB 1363 – Places of Public Accommodation – Captioning for Motion Picture Houses – Alterations**, sponsored by Delegate Harry Bhandari. This bill requires certain motion picture houses with fewer than eight screens to provide open captioning for at least two screenings each week.

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Most importantly, this bill ensures that communities can enjoy equal access to movies without needing devices or other methods, just as others do when attending a film.

I am a mother of two deaf girls. They love going to the movies. Options for movies with open captions are limited, and captions devices almost always have problems. It's so disappointing when we go to the movies and the caption devices aren't working. I'd say it's 50/50 chance the device won't work. We miss part of the film trying to fix them. Often we get the movie tickets reimbursed because the devices aren't working, but that has still wasted our time and money for concessions etc. Sometimes we decide it's not worth it and wait for streaming.

Thank you for your time and attention to this important matter. I appreciate your support of HB 1363.

Sincerely,

Lauren Zummo
lszummo@gmail.com

March 4, 2025

Economic Matters Committee
State Capitol
Annapolis, MD 21401

Dear Economic Matters Committee:

My name is Tiasha Bera and I am Deaf. I live in Montgomery County.

I am writing to request your support for **HB 1363 – Places of Public Accommodation – Captioning for Motion Picture Houses – Alterations**, sponsored by Delegate Harry Bhandari. This bill requires certain motion picture houses with fewer than eight screens to provide open captioning for at least two screenings each week.

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Most importantly, this bill ensures that communities can enjoy equal access to movies without needing devices or other methods, just as others do when attending a film.

Thank you for your time and attention to this important matter. I appreciate your support of HB 1363.

Sincerely,

Tiasha Bera
deafrulers@gmail.com