



March 4, 2025

Economic Matters Committee
State Capitol
Annapolis, MD 21401

Dear Economic Matters Committee:

I am writing on behalf of the Baltimore City Association of the Deaf (BCAD) to express our support for HB 1363 - Places of Public Accommodation – Captioning for Motion Picture Houses – Alterations, sponsored by Delegate Harry Bhandari. This bill mandates that motion picture houses with fewer than eight screens provide open captioning for at least two screenings each week.

The BCAD Board strongly believes that this bill will significantly benefit the diverse population of Baltimore City, including children and adults learning to read, senior citizens, veterans, individuals with learning or developmental disabilities, English language learners, and the Deaf, DeafBlind, and Hard of Hearing communities.

Not only will this bill benefit the residents of Baltimore City, but it will also provide greater accessibility to movie theaters across the state. This includes areas such as the Eastern Shore, Western Maryland, and other counties where movie theaters do not currently offer open captioned films. By lowering the threshold for open captioned screenings, this bill will make more theaters across Maryland accessible to a wider range of people, regardless of location.

Currently, there are no movie theaters in Baltimore City that are required to provide open captioned screenings, as the existing law mandates that theaters must have eight or more screens. This bill will lower the threshold to accommodate four theaters in the city that would be required to offer open captioned films:

- **Senator Theatre** – 4 screens
- **Charles Theatre** – 5 screens
- **Harbor East Cinemas** – 7 screens
- **Warehouse Cinemas Rotunda** – 7 screens

Many community members have expressed the difficulty of having to travel at least 30 minutes outside of Baltimore City to access open captioned movies. If this bill is passed, it would allow individuals to enjoy these screenings at theaters just a few minutes away, either by car or on foot.

Implementing this law will ensure open captioned movies are available to everyone in the community. We believe that the impact on movie theaters will be minimal. Offering two open captioned screenings per week will not significantly affect operations, as theaters will not need to hire additional staff to accommodate captioning. In fact, the change will likely attract more moviegoers, as individuals from the Deaf and Hard of Hearing community, as well as those who benefit from captioning, will have a convenient and accessible option to enjoy films.

This bill presents a win/win situation for both moviegoers and theaters alike. It ensures inclusivity and provides greater access to entertainment, benefiting people of all backgrounds.

Thank you for your time and attention to this important matter. We appreciate your support for HB 1363 and for making our community more accessible to everyone.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Jacob Leffler". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the typed name.

Jacob Leffler
President
bcadeaf2020@gmail.com