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**HB1363**

April 1, 2025

**TO:** Members of the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee

**FROM:** Nina Themelis, Director of Mayor's Office of Government Relations

**RE:** House Bill 1363 - Places of Public Accommodation – Captioning Motion Pictures Houses – Alterations

**POSITION: Support**

Chair Smith, Vice Chair Waldstreicher, and Members of the Committee, please be advised that the Baltimore City Administration (BCA) respectfully requests a **favorable** committee report on House Bill (HB) 1363.

HB 1363 lowers the number of screens a cinema must have before it is required to provide open movie captioning from eight to four. Open-captioning means that Deaf and hard-of-hearing persons can read the dialogue on the big screen rather than use small captioning devices which interfere with the viewing experience. As it stands without the passage of this bill, no cinema within Baltimore City is required to offer open-captioning screenings. This bill amends that issue and makes Baltimore City theaters more accessible.

This will better serve the Deaf and hard-of-hearing community, including many Baltimore seniors, so that they too can fully enjoy the big screen experience. Over time, the BCA anticipates that two open-captioning screenings per week in Baltimore cinemas will draw viewers who would otherwise stay home to watch a movie, increasing both business and serve the cause of better accessibility.

Having the dialogue on the big screen enhances the movie-going experience for a variety of individuals.

While there may be some resistance to legislation this for fear of an adverse financial impact, such screenings, particularly if offered at the more attractive times, would actually increase the overall audience because it would also be more accessible to seniors and persons for whom English is a second language, boosting the overall customer base of cinemas.

Due to the above reasons, the Baltimore City Administration on Disabilities respectfully requests a **favorable** report on House Bill 1363.