



Live the life you want.

From: Ronza Othman, President
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To: House Economic Matters Committee

The members of the National Federation of the Blind of Maryland urge the House Economic Matters Committee to give a favorable report to HB0985. This bill would prohibit streaming services from having the volume of ads and commercials be louder than the streamed programming content.

Blind and low vision consumers use streaming services like other segments of society. However, blind and low vision consumers access these streaming services using assistive technology such as text to speech software that verbalizes text on the screen in an auditory way so the blind and low vision consumer can have access to the same information nonvisually. However, when streaming services raise the volume on their ads, this interferes with the consumer's ability to hear the assistive technology reading the screen, which hinders our ability to navigate with the page. For example, the ads are so loud that blind and low vision consumers are not able to hear our assistive technology so we are held hostage until the ads end, whereas others not using assistive technology can choose to skip some ads. We cannot hear our technology over the commercial to navigate the "skip ad" button. We also can't interact with the ad itself should we wish to buy what is being marketed to us either.

Moreover, our deaf blind members report having to spend time adjusting their hearing aids and other devices each time the noise level changes, meaning they waste their time having to adjust their devices once the program begins; this hinders their ability to enjoy the program and interferes with what they paid to access.

For those reasons, we ask for a favorable report on HB0985. For questions, please contact me at President@nfbmd.org or at 443-426-4110.