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DEPUTY MAJORITY WHIP

Economic Matters Committee



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THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

February 20, 2026

Chair Valderrama
Vice Chair Charkoudian
House Economic Matters Committee
230 Taylor House Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401

**FAV Written Testimony for HB985 Consumer Protection - Video Streaming Services -
Loudness of Commercial Advertisements**

Dear Chair Valderrama, Vice Chair Charkoudian, and Members of the House Economic Matters Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to present House Bill 985. This legislation addresses an increasingly prevalent consumer protection concern associated with modern media consumption.

As viewing habits continue to shift from traditional television to digital streaming platforms, consumers are frequently exposed to commercial advertisements that are significantly louder than the programming they accompany. Industry data indicates that more than 85 percent of U.S. households subscribe to at least one streaming service, and over 75 percent regularly view ad-supported content. Streaming now accounts for the largest share of television viewing nationwide, surpassing both cable and broadcast. Correspondingly, consumer complaints regarding disruptive and inconsistent advertisement volume have grown in recent years.

Although federal law addressed this issue for broadcast and cable television through the Commercial Advertisement Loudness Mitigation (CALM) Act of 2010, its scope is limited primarily to traditional television providers regulated by the Federal Communications Commission. Consequently, many online streaming platforms operate outside clear and consistent loudness enforcement standards. The FCC continues to receive thousands of consumer complaints annually related to advertisement volume, with reported complaints rising from fewer than 800 in 2022 to more than 1,700 in 2024. This trend demonstrates persistent challenges even within regulated media environments and underscores a significant regulatory gap in digital streaming contexts. While some industry stakeholders have raised concerns regarding technical implementation in streaming environments, established audio-leveling standards are already widely utilized across digital media platforms, demonstrating that consistent compliance is both feasible and aligned with current industry practices.

Recent legislative developments in other jurisdictions further illustrate the need for updated protections. In 2025, California enacted Senate Bill 576, which requires streaming platforms to ensure that advertisements do not exceed the volume of the programming they accompany. The legislation passed with broad bipartisan support and reflects a growing consensus that consumer protections should apply consistently across both traditional and digital media environments.

House Bill 985 seeks to address this regulatory gap by requiring streaming services to maintain consistent audio levels between advertisements and program content. Importantly, the bill does not impose new technical burdens on industry stakeholders. Established audio-leveling standards already exist and are widely utilized across media production and streaming platforms. These standards enable providers to maintain uniform sound levels using existing technology, making compliance both practical and cost-effective. Accordingly, the legislation does not introduce new regulatory concepts, but rather extends longstanding consumer protection principles to evolving media technologies to ensure consistency and fairness across viewing platforms.

Beyond consumer convenience, this issue also carries broader public well-being implications. Excessive and sudden increases in audio volume can disrupt household environments and may disproportionately affect vulnerable populations, including older adults, children, and individuals with sensory sensitivities or hearing-related conditions. Research in public health and acoustics indicates that abrupt sound spikes can trigger stress responses, disrupt sleep patterns, and contribute to reduced comfort in residential settings.

House Bill 985 reflects Maryland's ongoing commitment to maintaining modern consumer protection standards that align with technological advancements. As media consumption continues to evolve, regulatory frameworks must adapt to ensure consistent protections for consumers. By establishing clear expectations for streaming platforms, this bill promotes fairness, predictability, and a more equitable digital media environment while maintaining balanced regulatory expectations for industry participants.

For these reasons, I respectfully request a favorable report on House Bill 985.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Marlon Amprey". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "M" and a distinct "A".

Delegate Marlon Amprey
40th Legislative District of Maryland