



Maryland Developmental Disabilities Council

CREATING CHANGE • IMPROVING LIVES

House Government, Labor, and Elections Committee
HB 435: Places of Public Accommodation – Open Movie Captioning
February 17, 2026
Position: Support

The Maryland Developmental Disabilities Council (Council) is an independent public policy organization that creates change to make it possible for people with developmental disabilities to live the lives they want with the support they need. Our vision is that people with and without disabilities in Maryland live, learn, work, and play together. HB 435 benefits everyone and takes another important step to ensure more Marylanders can access and enjoy movies.

WHAT does this legislation do?

- It expands the requirement for movie theaters (a place of public accommodation) to provide open captioning at least two screenings of a movie for the public. Open movie captioning means the captions (subtitles) are always visible on the screen for everyone watching the movie.
- In 2024, the General Assembly passed the requirement to for movie theaters with 8 or more screens. **This bill would make it a requirement if a movie theater has 4 or more screens.**

WHY is this legislation important?

- **Open movie captioning benefits everyone.** Without captions on the screen, many people cannot full understand the movie or enjoy it the same way others do. This includes children, youth, and adults. Research also finds benefits for people with disabilities, people for whom English is not their first language, and children and adults learning to read.
- **Open movie captioning promotes fairness.** Going to the movies is a common leisure activity that people use to relax, have fun, and spend time with others. Open captions help make sure more people can enjoy this recreational experience together.
- **Open movie captioning reduces barriers.** Some people avoid going to the movies because asking for special devices (those used for closed captioning) can be uncomfortable, confusing, or unreliable. Testimony on this bill for the last several years offers repeated examples of the burden on people seeking captions at movie theaters under current practices.

Requiring open captions in more movie theaters is a simple, practical way to make movies more accessible, welcoming, and fair for a wide range of people.

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