



February 11, 2026

Government, Labor, and Election Committee
State Capitol
Annapolis, MD 21401

Dear Government, Labor, and Election Committee:

The Autism Society of Maryland strongly supports the passage of House Bill 435. This legislation would require motion picture houses with four or more screens to provide open movie captioning for a minimum of two screenings per week. This modest but meaningful requirement would significantly expand access to open-captioned films, particularly in underserved regions such as Western Maryland, North Central Maryland, Southern Maryland, the Eastern Shore, and Baltimore City.

Beyond benefiting Maryland residents, the bill would attract Deaf, DeafBlind, and Hard of Hearing patrons—as well as those with neurodivergent conditions—from neighboring states including Delaware, the District of Columbia, Pennsylvania, Virginia, and West Virginia. These out-of-state visitors would generate additional revenue for Maryland theaters and the broader economy, turning accessibility into an economic advantage. It also supports children learning to read, senior citizens, and people learning English as a second language—enhancing the movie-going experience for diverse moviegoers without additional cost or complexity.

It is essential for Maryland to lead in ensuring true accessibility in public accommodations. Closed-captioning devices (such as captioning glasses and similar equipment) have long been plagued by documented problems, including frequent malfunctions, inconsistent availability, and significant physical and cognitive strain for users. These devices often fail to deliver an enjoyable, inclusive experience and can undermine users' dignity by making their disability visible in ways that open captions do not.

The Autism Society of Maryland respectfully urges the committee to issue a favorable report on HB 435 and for the Maryland General Assembly to pass this important measure.

Thank you for your commitment to equity and inclusion.

Sincerely,

Melissa Rosenberg, Executive Director