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SB0259

February 3, 2026

TO: Members of the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee

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

RE: Senate Bill 259 - Places of Public Accommodation - Open Movie Captioning

POSITION: Support

Chair Smith, Vice Chair Waldstreicher, and Members of the Committee, please be advised that the Baltimore City Administration (BCA) **supports** Senate Bill (SB) 259 - Places of Public Accommodation - Open Movie Captioning.

SB 259 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 can interfere with the viewing experience. Currently, no cinemas within Baltimore City must offer open-captioning screenings. Without the passage of this bill, this will continue to be the case. 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 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 for fear of an adverse financial impact, such screenings, particularly if offered at the more attractive times, would actually increase the overall audience because they would also be more accessible to seniors and persons for whom English is a second language, boosting the overall customer base of cinemas.

For the above-stated reasons, the BCA respectfully requests a **favorable** report on Senate Bill 259.