



Vermont Hands and Voices  
PO BOX 1164  
Montpelier, VT 05601

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Representative Ann Pugh  
Chair, House Human Services Committee  
Vermont State House  
115 State Street  
Montpelier, VT 05633-5301

February 24, 2020

Representative Pugh,

Vermont Hands & Voices is a parent-driven, non-profit organization that supports families with children who are D/deaf or hard of hearing, without bias to communication modes or methodology. Our trademarked motto is: "What works for your child is what makes the choice right!". We provide families with the resources, networks, and information they need to improve communication access and educational outcomes for their children. Our outreach activities, parent/professional collaboration, and advocacy efforts are focused on enabling D/deaf/hard of hearing children to reach their highest potential.

We write you in support of H.312, open captioning in movie theaters. For many families, going to the movies is a wonderful social opportunity that gives way to great discussions after viewing. Children tend to view movies with friends, as a small group, or even as a birthday event. Many D/d/hh children, and their families, have ceased attending the movies because they cannot understand the dialog. Turning on open captions is as simple as adding subtitles to home viewed movies. There is no cost. By offering open caption screening, the opportunities for families of all types would be abundant and more financial revenue would be available to those theaters. It is a clear win for all parties.

We support H.312 for D/d/hh individuals of all ages, but our focus is that of children. Children want to do what their family and peers do. Attending movie screenings is an experience that anyone should be able to access. By not having open captioning it alienates significant markets and populations; children must wait until the movie is available to rent in order to converse with their peers about the newest popular movie. It forces them to be outcast from their peers. It is not a choice they make, it is one made for them.

H.312 requires open caption screenings to be clearly identified on all marketing materials, so movie goers may choose viewing with captions or without, based on their preference. Open captions are normally at the bottom or top of the screen, so it does not hinder any individual's enjoyment of the motion picture; it is easily ignored by those who do not utilize it. Reading is fundamental to education, and open captions captures the attention of young children who do



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not yet have reading ability, but opens them up to the normalcy of it, and it gives those with reading skills a way to fully access the movie. By supporting this bill, we are supporting children and their families ability to partake in societal norms if they so choose. It allows access and choice, something Vermont Hands & Voices holds in high esteem. For these reasons, and many more, Vermont Hand & Voices supports H.312, open captioning in movie theaters. We hope you will too.

If you have questions or would like more information, please contact us at 802-522-0222, or via email, [vthandsandvoices@gmail.com](mailto:vthandsandvoices@gmail.com).

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Michelle John", with the text "MS CEOLD" written in a smaller font to the right of the signature.

Michelle John, MS, CEOLD  
President