



January 22, 2020

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

Dear Rep. Pugh:

Thank you very much for scheduling a hearing on H. 312, "An act relating to open movie captioning in movie theaters."

More than 60,000 Vermonters have hearing loss and are at risk of social isolation because of their disability. We no longer enjoy social activities like attending a movie with family and friends, because we cannot understand the dialog. We represent a large, significant lost opportunity for movie theater owners.

To meet ADA requirements, movie theaters currently offer wireless headsets or small caption screens that fit in cupholders. Neither work very well, as reported by many HLAA members. We much prefer the full inclusion and reliability offered by open captions.

Open captions (subtitles on the bottom of the movie screen) are the best way to accommodate our disability. From the movie theater's perspective, offering open captions is as simple as turning on subtitles on home-streamed movies. There is no cost.

Many cinema owners oppose open caption screenings because they feel that captions are strongly disliked by most movie goers. However, there is no credible evidence in support of this belief.

H. 312 requires that, on average, open caption screenings make up 17% of the total and that open caption screenings are clearly identified in all marketing materials.

H. 312 gives all moviegoers a choice. People who dislike captions select screenings without them; those who prefer captions choose open caption shows.

Offering a small number of open caption screenings will bring many of the 60,000 Vermonters with hearing loss back to the movies.

Yours Sincerely,

Charlea Baker, President
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