

**AARP Vermont Testimony - H. 312
Open Captions in some Movie Screenings
January 24, 2020**

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of bill H.312. AARP VT has approximately 130,000 age 50+ members statewide. AARP VT believes passage of this legislation will provide people with hearing loss, and other barriers to comprehending the spoken word, with increased access to motion picture entertainment and that in doing so the legislation can also help to reduce social isolation.

Hearing Loss is an invisible but common health issue. Based on national data, there are potentially between 62,000 and 125,000 Vermonters of all ages experiencing some degree of hearing loss. It is important to note that the incidence of hearing loss increases dramatically with age.

- For older people (age 65 and older) the incidence of hearing loss can be as high as 33% - 50%.
- Based on Vermont Census Data (July 1, 2018) 18.7% or 117,000 of Vermonters are age 65 and older which means that there could potentially be between 39,000 and 59,000 older Vermonters experiencing hearing loss.

With an aging demographic in Vermont, these numbers will continue to rise¹.

Based on current national data, as many as 17% of older Americans suffer from isolation. According to the 2018 America's Ranking Senior Report, Vermont is ranked 17th in the US for risk of social isolation among older adults. **One of the most prominent individual-level risk factors for feelings of isolation in older adults seen repeatedly in the literature is having a physical (mobility or sensory) impairment, such as hearing loss. Older people who live in rural parts of the state are more at risk for social isolation.** Increased social contact is one way to

¹ <https://legislature.vermont.gov/assets/Legislative-Reports/Final-Council-Report-December-2020.pdf>

help reduce social isolation and while having adequate access to a motion picture screening may seem insignificant, it is an activity that brings people together in a social environment that is relatively affordable.

The 50+ population in the United States now represents four generations: The GI Generation, born 1901-1926; The Silent Generation, born 1927-1945; Baby Boomers, born 1946-1964; and Generation X (Gen X), born 1965-1980. Nationwide in 2018 they contributed \$8.3 trillion in economic activity to the US economy. Fully 56 cents of every dollar spent in the U.S. in 2018 was attributable to the 50+ population, and this share is set to increase to 61 cents by 2050. If movies become more accessible to older Vermonters with hearing loss, we believe there is a 50+ economic engine ready to participate².

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of H.312.

Philene Taormina, Director of Advocacy, AARP VT

Below are more resources on social isolation:

https://www.aarp.org/content/dam/aarp/aarp_foundation/2012_PDFs/AARP-Foundation-Isolation-Framework-Report.pdf

https://dail.vermont.gov/sites/dail/files//documents/2018_Social_Isolation_Handout.pdf

² https://www.aarp.org/content/dam/aarp/research/surveys_statistics/econ/2019/longevity-economy-outlook.doi.10.26419-2Fint.00042.001.pdf