

January 21, 2020

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

Dear Rep. Pugh & Members of the Human Services Committee:

I am writing in support of H.312, proposed legislation for open captions in movie theaters throughout the state of Vermont.

My name is Carol DeVine and I am a 71 year old, who had perfect hearing until age 63 at which time I suffered what is commonly known as a *sudden hearing loss*. For reasons still unknown, my hearing disappeared over a period of 3- 4 days and has never returned. I have adapted to this condition with the support of my family and friends, as well as some pretty sophisticated technology, which I am fortunate enough to be able to obtain.

However, that technology does not extend to being able to attend movies in theaters that do not offer open captions. Until I lost my hearing, my husband and I were frequent movie goers, attending at least a couple of times each month. Since 2011, I have only seen one movie, which was in a theater in New York City that had captions. I know that many people in my age group, even if they have only age related hearing loss, have also stopped attending movies because they do not fully understand the dialogue. Interestingly enough, these are the very people who would make up a large portion of a theater's attendance, since they have the time and the money to go to the theater whenever they want.

In the state of Vermont 60,000 people have some level of hearing loss...that's a lot of theater tickets! Not being able to attend the theater is one of a number of factors that contributes to the social isolation of many people in our state and offering a limited number of open caption screenings would certainly bring many of them back to the movies and simultaneously improve their social lives.

Many people don't realize that this is a very simple process...turning on open captions is as simple as accessing subtitles in movies at home. If open captioned screenings were clearly identified in the marketing materials of the movie theaters, this would certainly boost the attendance in those theaters and people would be able to choose to attend showings with or without captions. It would be a win-win for all those suffering from hearing loss, as well as for the theaters, which would benefit from the increased attendance.

This is a very simple idea really...easy to implement, little if any cost, and will have enormous benefits to many people throughout Vermont. I personally would be most grateful if this legislation were given serious consideration, so I could once again enjoy going to the movies!

Sincerely,

Carol DeVine  
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