



BETTERLIVING
A U D I O L O G Y
P. (802)651-9374 | F. (802)651-9376

Dr. Julie Bler, Au.D., F-AAA
Dr. Corey Gibeault, Au.D., CCC-A
54 WTwin Oaks Ter, Ste 10, South Burlington, VT 05403
135-A Creek Road, Middlebury, VT 05753

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

January 30, 2020

Dear Rep. Ann Pugh,

As owner and Audiologist at Better Living Audiology, I am writing to support the members of Vermont's community of individuals with hearing loss and H.312, the open caption movie bill.

Better Living Audiology is a private Audiology practice with locations in both South Burlington and Middlebury, VT. We offer diagnostic hearing evaluations and hearing aid fittings and service to patients of all ages. We currently have a patient base of over 2500 individuals and expect to grow with Vermont's aging population. Many of our patients come to us because of difficulty understanding loved ones, communicating in group situations, and for issues hearing in public places such as restaurants and movie theaters. We can offer solutions for most of these problems; however, movie theaters are a unique environment in which hearing aids and other personal assistive devices do not always help.

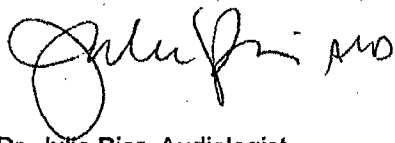
Vermont has more than 60,000 residents who suffer from some degree of hearing loss making it difficult for them to enjoy TV or movies the way many of us with normal hearing do. In many cases, simply turning up the volume does not help because of the way hearing loss occurs with age, worsening in the high pitches while preserving much of the hearing in the low pitches. These individuals, most elderly, often begin to withdraw from situations in which hearing and understanding is difficult for them. Social isolation becomes a significant concern.

Open captions are an excellent way to bring these individuals back to the movie theaters, allowing them to enjoy the experience and social interaction again by displaying the dialogue on the screen while the movie is playing. There is no cost to do this, it is already used in many other theaters in the country, and it meets the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). In addition, it is a benefit to those with normal hearing as well.

H.312 requires open caption screenings to be clearly identified on all marketing materials, so that movie goers can choose showtimes with captions or without, based on their preference. Everyone will have an equal opportunity to enjoy the movie in the way that best suits their individual needs.

Thank you for your time in considering H.312. Please do not hesitate to contact me with any questions at 802-651-9374.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Julie Bier, PhD". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large loop at the beginning and a trailing "PhD" at the end.

Dr. Julie Bier, Audiologist
Better Living Audiology