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February 3, 2020

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

Dear Representative Pugh,

I am writing to you in support of a new bill introduced: H.312. This act is referring to open movie captioning in movie theaters. At least 60,000 Vermonters have hearing loss. This includes a significant elderly population who have stopped attending movies due to difficulty hearing the dialogue throughout. Open captioning would allow Vermonters with hearing loss to enjoy a social experience with friends and family members. Hearing loss is a risk factor for social isolation and depression. This bill would reduce the social impacts of hearing loss for many Vermonters. Offering a small number of open caption screenings would bring many of these people back to the movies. As written, this bill would require open caption offerings to be clearly posted for residents to choose whether they attend shows with captions or not.

I am an audiologist serving a large population of Vermonters with hearing loss. I can confidently say that this bill would be well received by our patients. One of our patients comes to mind when thinking about this potential bill. This patient is a child living in NY State. The movie theaters near his hometown have open caption capabilities. He and his parents have told me several times that the only reason they are able to enjoy movies together is that the open captioning is available. While on a recent trip in Vermont, they were sad to see that this was not an option at a local movie theater. This bill would support quality of life for Vermonters. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Julie Stefanski
Julie Stefanski, Au.D.
Audiology Services
University of Vermont Medical Center