

March 19, 2015

Senator Sara Gelser, Chair
Senate Committee on Health Care and Early Childhood
Oregon State Legislature
900 Court Street NE
Salem, OR 97301

Dear Senator Sara Gelser,

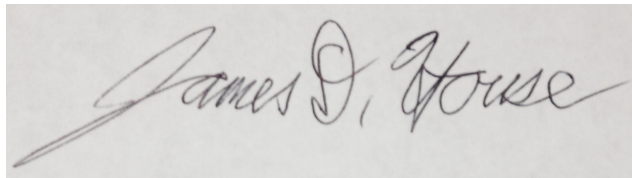
More than 186,000 Oregonians live with varying levels of hearing disabilities. As an “invisible” disability, it is easily overlooked, and this population is often underserved or unserved, mainly due to lack of accessible information. As “electronic curb cuts” closed captioning has been the best equalizer for deaf and hard of hearing people. Captioning is also an excellent literacy tool that benefits people learning to read and speak English. By reading text while the words are spoken, people retain information longer than if they heard the words alone.

I am one of the principles in a local initiative: Portland, Turn On the Captions Now, where we are seeking to have all televisions in public places be required to display captioning. The goal of this proposed ordinance is to increase access to information in restaurants, bars, waiting rooms, gyms, and other places.

By requiring captioning, the State of Oregon would become a leading role model in education. Schools are asking children to view YouTube videos for homework assignments. Many of the videos online are either poorly captioned or not captioned, thus depriving students who depend on captioning equal access to educational materials they need to succeed in their education. Senate Bill 772 will begin to remove those barriers.

Please support Senate Bill 772, which will require that all videos online and on DVDs and other removable media be captioned. This bill will begin to provide the functional equivalency and access to information for employment, recreation, and life that these citizens deserve.

Sincerely,

A photograph of a handwritten signature in black ink on a light-colored background. The signature is written in a cursive style and reads "James D. House".

James House
358 NE 108th Ave
Portland, OR 97220

cc: Oregon Association of the Deaf, Inc.