

Senator Steiner Hayward, Co-Chair Representative Greg Smith,
Co-Chair Ways and Means Subcommittee on General Government
Oregon State Legislature
900 Court Street
NE Salem, OR 97301

June 12, 2015

Dear Co-Chairs Senator Steiner Hayward and Representative Smith, and the Members of the Subcommittee on General Government:

Hello, my name is James D. House, a long-time advocate for captioning. I am deaf and live in Northeast Portland. As a founder of an ongoing grassroots effort to increase access to captioning, Portland: Turn on the Captions now, when passed, will require all television sets in public places to display captioning.

I encourage you to expedite the passage of SB772. Thanks to Senator Sara Gelser, Chair of the Senate Human Services and Early Childhood committee, for her generous support of closed captioning, in recognition of making equal access to information otherwise freely available to the public. Because of this bill when passed, hearing disabilities will no longer deter participants from shaping the future of Oregon.

SB 772, which would establish a new Oregon law requiring all televisions in the State Capitol to display captioning at all times, creates a win-win situation for the state government and for the people you serve. In addition to the grassroots work in Portland, this bill also goes toward meeting the goals of Title II in the Americans with Disabilities Act, which turns 25 years old next month.

Let me explain why it is important to have closed captioning on video and on the Internet for the public in all Oregon State Legislature buildings and throughout the state. As you may notice, there are no closed captioning anywhere in our state capitol building, even for the televisions in lawmakers' offices which broadcast regular sessions and committee hearings. There are assistive listening devices available for attendees who are hard of hearing available in the Senate and House chambers, but no televisions throughout the complex displayed with closed captioning, which would boost their comprehension of proceedings on the floor. The captions should be turned on and remain on at all time the televisions are in use.

Hearing disabilities are the number one disability among senior citizens who are your loyal voters. They experience hearing loss due to aging or other medical conditions, and need access to closed captioning. Access to captioning will remove any barrier to information being disseminated over televisions, and truly 'inform the masses with a huge impact for little costs. Captions for television can be used again online and live on in archival records to help with future researchers.

My colleague, Steven Brown from Oregon Association of the Deaf, points out that captioning has an impact on the ... "majority" in a way that Jefferson perhaps never foresaw, but Benjamin

Franklin (who developed hearing loss in his later years) would have approved of wholeheartedly.”

Another colleague, David S. Viers from the Hearing Loss Association emphasized, “I want the general public to know that captioning is a godsend.”

Many others have elaborated thoroughly on the benefits of captioning for deaf and hard of hearing people and other users, so all that is left to say is to please pass this bill through the Oregon State Legislature now.

Thank you very much,

/s/

James D House
358 NE 108th Ave
Portland, OR 97220