

Submitter: Mark Foster

On Behalf Of:

Committee: Senate Committee On Human Services

Measure: SB569

My name is Mark Foster and I fully support this bill. I have severe-to-profound hearing loss since birth. I am a Portland resident and 6th generation Oregonian. I am also a member and current President of Portland chapter of the Hearing Loss Association of America. Captioning is so important for people with hearing loss like me to be able to rely upon it and understand and enjoy television much like people with hearing loss.. I often find that my friends and family tell me that they also benefit from captioning on TV particularly in public spaces as they don't always get to understand what is being said. I remember a time when there was no captioning prior to 1993 when decoders were mandated by the Americans with Disabilities Act to be included in televisions for communication access. Before that, I really struggled to even understand much on television other than trying to read people's lips (as long as they were facing the screen) or always asking my family what was said. It allows for the hearing impaired viewer like myself to be able to sit back and watch television with assurance that I'm getting the information (such as important news alerts) and to relax and enjoy the art and beauty of television. I often find that places like bars or restaurants do not offer captioning on TVs and I find that is a shame because I know other people would benefit from also getting information and enjoying the televisions so prominently displayed for viewers to watch. I know people would say that captioning is obstructive or disruptive for television watching, but I believe it also benefits people who don't have hearing loss as they don't have to worry about turning up the TV too loud in a bar, restaurant, or other public space, and just have the captioning on for anyone to be able to follow and enjoy. It allows for inclusive and equitable access for all and it's the right thing to do. Captioning is amazing technology and we are so privileged and fortunate to have it and I fully support this bill to mandate the use of captioning in public spaces for the aforementioned reasons. Thank you so much for allowing me to provide written testimony on this important matter!