

Supporting always-on captioning in public places

Date: 5/11/2022

To: *Conference Committee on S.F. 2673*

Sen. Warren Limmer, Chair

Sen. Andrew Mathews

Sen. David Osmek

Sen. Karla Bigham

Sen. Ron Latz

Rep. Carlos Mariani, Chair

Rep. Jamie Becker-Finn

Rep. Cedrick Frazier

Rep. Brian Johnson

Rep. Kelly Moller

From: Minnesota Commission of the Deaf, DeafBlind & Hard of Hearing

Please support proposed language for captions in public places

The Minnesota Commission of the Deaf, DeafBlind & Hard of Hearing urges committee members to create a better and safer Minnesota for the 20% of Minnesotans who have some degree of hearing loss by supporting the proposed closed-captioned television language in Article 12 of SF2673 ([first unofficial engrossment](#), posted 4/30/22).

We have long advocated for captions to be as widely available as possible. Since 2005, the Commission has won passage of several captioning-related bills and conducted campaigns to convince restaurants, bars, and other businesses with televisions to keep closed captions activated at all times. Most recently, in 2021, the Commission ran a radio and TV campaign urging businesses to enable closed captions using standard features already included in televisions. Audiences statewide heard this message 23,525 times on radio and 2,114 times on TV.

Despite those education efforts and federal law requiring captions, public places are not turning on captions consistently. The House committee heard from testifiers, including people with age-related hearing loss, a traumatic brain injury survivor, and a military vet, how they still encounter public places unprepared to enable captions. These refusals to comply with this simple, no-cost request are detrimental to the quality of life – and sometimes safety – of deaf and hard of hearing Minnesotans.

It is time for the failure to provide this no-cost access to be recognized for what it is: discrimination against up to 20% of Minnesotans on the basis of disability. We are grateful to Senators Hoffman and Rarick as well as Representatives Daniels, Theis, and Quam for their advocacy on this issue, and we respectfully urge committee members to join them in supporting captions in public places.

Signed,



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Advocating for communication access and equal opportunity with the 20% of Minnesotans who are deaf, deafblind and hard of hearing.