

Supporting always-on captioning in public places

Date: 2/21/2023

To: Judiciary Finance and Civil Law
Rep. Jamie Becker-Finn, Chair
Rep. Cedrick Frazier, Vice Chair

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

Please support captions in public places of accommodation – HF909

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 with hearing loss by supporting HF909.

We have long advocated for captions to be as widely available as possible. Beginning in 2005, the Commission won passage of several captioning-related bills and conducted campaigns to encourage restaurants, bars, and other businesses with televisions to keep closed captions activated at all times. Most recently, 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 the radio and 2,114 times on TV.

Despite those education efforts – and federal law requiring captions, caption functionality already included for decades in TVs and equipment from content providers, and improvements in caption appearance and placement – 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 Representative Daniels for his advocacy on this issue, and we respectfully urge committee members to join us in supporting captions in public places.

Signed,



Alicia Lane, *Government Relations Director*