



December 12, 2018

Committee of the Whole  
Council of the District of Columbia  
Suite 410  
1350 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20004.

Dear Esteemed Members of the Council of the District of Columbia:

On behalf of the members of the American Cochlear Implant Alliance, we write in support of B22-0957, the Open Movie Captioning Requirement Act of 2018. The American Cochlear Implant Alliance (ACI Alliance) is a non-profit, 501(c)3 organization whose mission is to advance the gift of hearing provided by cochlear implants through research, advocacy and awareness. Members include clinicians, teachers and therapists in educational settings, researchers in clinical and academic settings, parents of children using cochlear implants and other hearing assistive technologies, adult cochlear implant recipients, and other advocates.

While 21<sup>st</sup> hearing technology does provide the gift of hearing to so many, we also understand that importance of open captioning for all who may struggle to understand the sound in the movie environment. Additionally, many individuals with mild to moderate hearing loss do not use hearing assistance technology and benefit from captioning. This legislation follows in the footsteps of revered live theaters such as the Kennedy Center that provide captioning on weekends and other peak times to ensure the enjoyment of all attendees. We believe this bill not only expands the opportunity for everyone, including the deaf and hard of hearing, to enjoy popular movies, but provides enough flexibility to movie theaters while it brings them into better compliance with the American with Disabilities Act (ADA). While the ADA did not require open captioning all the time, it does specifically note the need for movie theaters to provide periodic opened showings. Currently this is not being provided. Further, in the time since the ADA was passed in 1990, open captioning has become widespread and accepted by the population. Bars and restaurants with televised screens nearly always have the captions on. People watch films on their computers and pads with captioning going. Captioning is now mainstream and should be part of the movie going experience—at least some of the time.

We do encourage the council to amend the bill to require that one of the four showings be during peak times on the weekend as well. As mentioned above, other venues in the DC Metro region already provide open captioning. We thank the DC Council for its consideration of this bill and we urge the Council to pass B22-0957.

Regards,

/s/  
Donna Sorkin  
Executive Director  
ACI Alliance

/s/  
Nichole Westin  
Government Policy Manager  
ACI Alliance