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House Civil Rights & Judiciary Committee
Attn: Rep. Jamila Taylor, Chair
John L. O'Brien Building
P.O. Box 40600
Olympia, WA 98504

Re: WA SB 5486 - Relating to motion picture captioning in motion picture theaters

March 21, 2025

Dear Chair Taylor,

On behalf of the National Court Reporters Association (NCRA), I am writing to express our resolute support for Washington Senate Bill 5486, Concerning Open Motion Picture Captioning in Motion Picture Theaters. This legislation is a vital step toward ensuring equal access to places of public accommodation, and we commend your efforts to advance inclusivity for all Washingtonians.

Certified professional captioners are instrumental in making this vision a reality. Through their expertise, they deliver accurate, high-quality captions that enable individuals—whether members of the deaf and hard-of-hearing communities or others who rely on captions—to fully participate in the experience of motion pictures. These skilled professionals meticulously capture dialogue, sound effects, and contextual nuances, ensuring that public accommodations are truly accessible to all. Their work upholds the principle of equality by providing a seamless and equitable experience that automated systems cannot match.

In contrast, automatically generated captioning consistently proves inadequate for this purpose. Such technology frequently misinterprets speech, omits critical auditory details, and fails to accommodate diverse needs, resulting in a diminished experience for users. These deficiencies hinder equal access, particularly for those who depend on captions, and fall short of the standards necessary to serve the public effectively. SB 5486's focus on open captioning supported by professional expertise addresses this gap and aligns with the urgent need for reliable solutions.

Time is of the essence in advancing this legislation. Each delay in implementing effective captioning measures represents a denial of equality for those who rely on them to engage with public life. Prompt action on SB 5486 will affirm Washington's commitment to inclusivity and ensure that no one is left behind.

NCRA strongly encourages your committee's swift support. To further explore its significance and the critical role of certified captioners, I invite committee members to engage with our Government Relations Department. We are eager to provide additional resources and insights to aid your deliberations. Additionally, our Washington-based captioner members are available to meet with you, offering firsthand perspectives on how their work fosters accessibility and equity.

Sincerely,

Keith Lemons

Keith R. Lemons, FAPR, RPR, CRR (Ret.)
President, National Court Reporters Association