
SUBSTITUTE SENATE BILL 5486

State of Washington

69th Legislature

2025 Regular Session

By Senate Law & Justice (originally sponsored by Senators Orwall, Dhingra, Nobles, and Trudeau)

READ FIRST TIME 02/07/25.

1 AN ACT Relating to motion picture captioning in motion picture
2 theaters; adding a new section to chapter 49.60 RCW; prescribing
3 penalties; and providing an effective date.

4 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF WASHINGTON:

5 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 1.** A new section is added to chapter 49.60
6 RCW to read as follows:

7 (1) A place of public accommodation that is a motion picture
8 theater shall provide access to fully operational and well-maintained
9 closed captioning technology for the general public for each
10 screening of a motion picture that is produced and available with
11 closed captioning as required by Title III of the federal Americans
12 with disabilities act.

13 (2) If a motion picture is produced with open captioning content
14 and distributed to motion picture theaters, a place of public
15 accommodation that controls, operates, owns, or leases a motion
16 picture theater with six or more screens in the state, and which has
17 digital projection systems that support open captioning files, shall
18 provide open captioning screenings of each such motion picture that
19 has at least five scheduled screenings within each of the time
20 periods set forth below:

1 (a) Within each of the first two weeks of such a motion picture's
2 release, the motion picture theater shall provide at least two open
3 captioning screenings, of which at least one must begin between 5:59
4 p.m. and 11:01 p.m. on Fridays or between 10:59 a.m. and 11:01 p.m.
5 on Saturdays or Sundays.

6 (b) Within each week after the first two weeks of such a motion
7 picture's release, the motion picture theater shall provide at least
8 one open captioning screening per week, which must begin between 5:59
9 p.m. and 10:01 p.m. on Mondays, Tuesdays, Wednesdays, or Thursdays;
10 between 5:59 p.m. and 11:01 p.m. on Fridays; or between 10:59 a.m.
11 and 11:01 p.m. on Saturdays or Sundays.

12 (3) A motion picture theater with five or fewer screens must:

13 (a) Provide an open captioning screening within five calendar
14 days after receiving a request; or

15 (b) Offer open captioning consistent with the requirements for
16 theaters with six or more screens.

17 (4) Nothing in this section shall prevent a motion picture
18 theater from offering more open captioning screenings than required
19 by subsections (2) and (3) of this section.

20 (5) Motion picture theaters shall provide contact information on
21 their websites for the purpose of receiving and fulfilling requests
22 for open captioning screenings.

23 (6) If an open captioning screening of a motion picture overlaps
24 with one or more other open captioning screenings of the same motion
25 picture at the same motion picture theater, no more than one such
26 motion picture screening may be counted toward the minimum number of
27 screenings required by this section, except where it is not
28 practicable to avoid such overlap.

29 (7) A motion picture theater shall advertise the date and time of
30 open captioning screenings in the same manner as the motion picture
31 theater advertises all other motion picture screenings and indicate
32 which screenings will include open captioning by using the character
33 symbol "OC."

34 (8) A motion picture theater shall maintain documents sufficient
35 to demonstrate compliance with the requirements of this section for a
36 period of at least one year.

37 (9) A motion picture theater that fails to comply with the
38 requirements of this section is subject to a civil fine of up to \$100
39 for each violation. Written notice of the violation must be provided
40 to the motion picture theater and must state that the fine will be

1 assessed. The notice must also state that the motion picture theater
2 may cure the violation by complying with the requirements within 30
3 days after delivery of the notice. If the motion picture theater
4 demonstrates compliance within the 30-day period, the fine may not be
5 assessed and the violation must be dismissed. Any subsequent
6 violation results in a civil fine of up to \$300.

7 (10) The commission shall prepare an educational pamphlet
8 advising motion picture theaters of their duties and liabilities
9 under this section. The pamphlet must explain the differences between
10 closed captioning and open captioning and how motion picture theaters
11 should advertise open captioning screenings. The pamphlet must be
12 made available online.

13 (11) This section does not apply to drive-in theaters.

14 (12) For purposes of this section:

15 (a) "Closed captioning" means the written display of a movie's
16 dialogue or transcript and may include nonspeech information such as
17 music, character identities, and other sounds or sound effects by
18 means of a personal captioning device that delivers captions to
19 individual patrons.

20 (b) "Motion picture theater" means an establishment in which
21 feature motion pictures are regularly exhibited to the public for an
22 admission charge.

23 (c) "Open captioning" means the written, on-screen display of a
24 motion picture's dialogue and nonspeech information, which may
25 include music, the identity of the character speaking, or other
26 sounds and sound effects.

27 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 2.** This act takes effect January 1, 2026.

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