



PRESS RELEASE

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CONTACT:

James Yu (OHR) - (202) 227-1681; james.yu1@dc.gov

Ellie Sung (OHR) - (202) 727-6407; ellie.sung1@dc.gov

New Open Movie Captioning Requirement for DC Movie Theaters Begins October 1

District's Office of Human Rights will Oversee New Law to Support Accessible Cinematic Experiences

(WASHINGTON, DC) – The DC Office of Human Rights (OHR) enforces [the Open Movie Captioning Requirement Amendment Act of 2024](#) (“the Act”). By the start of the operating week beginning Friday, October 18, 2024, movie theaters with three or more screens within the District are required to provide a minimum number of open captioned movie showings, particularly during peak hours. Open captioning ensures seamless and equitable access to movie content for individuals who are Deaf or hard of hearing by displaying captions directly on the movie screen, eliminating the need for additional equipment or adjustments.

As the agency responsible for enforcing the law, OHR will administer the Act by conducting compliance checks and addressing consumer complaints to make sure that theaters adhere to the legal requirements.

“Enforcing the Act reaffirms our commitment to accessibility and inclusivity,” said Kenneth Saunders, OHR Acting Director. *“By ensuring that open captioning is available to all moviegoers, we are breaking down barriers, and OHR is dedicated to upholding this crucial legislation. Our compliance reviews will ensure theaters meet their obligations, fostering a more equitable entertainment landscape for everyone.”*

The Act establishes comprehensive requirements for movie theaters across the District to provide open captioning services, enhancing the cinematic experience for everyone. Key provisions include:

1. Theater Requirements:

- Theaters with three or more screens (starting the operating week of Friday, October 18, 2024): Must offer open captioning for three screenings within each of the first two weeks of a film’s release, including at least one screening during peak weekend hours, defined as between 5:59 PM and 11:01 PM on Fridays, and between 10:59 AM and 11:01 PM on Saturdays or Sundays. After the first two weeks of a film’s release, at least two weekly screenings must be captioned, one of which must be during peak hours.
- Theaters with two or fewer screens: Must provide open captioning within a reasonable time frame after receiving a request, or may choose to offer open captioning consistent with the requirements for theaters with three or more screens.
- Exceptions:
 - Films with fewer than seven showings per operating week are exempt.
 - Films that are not produced and made available to theaters with open captioning are exempt.
 - Theaters cannot willfully cancel captioned screenings but may be excused for unforeseen circumstances beyond the theater’s control such as equipment failure or weather.

2. Compliance and Oversight:

- OHR may conduct random compliance reviews at any time and will always perform at least three compliance reviews annually for theaters with three or more screens. Theaters must provide OHR with showtime information upon request. Additionally, OHR will receive violation complaints directly from consumers.

3. Penalties and Remedies:

- Theaters in violation must offer an additional open captioned showing within a week of receiving a notice of infraction and will be subject to additional compliance reviews. Repeated violations may lead to additional showing requirements and further oversight by OHR.

As part of responsibilities under the new Act, OHR will develop procedures for compliance reviews, create consumer report templates, and investigation processes, as well as issue violation notices as needed.

For more comprehensive information on the Act and compliance requirements, visit [here](#) or contact OHR directly at OHR.OpenCaptioning@dc.gov.

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About the District of Columbia Office of Human Rights

The District of Columbia Office of Human Rights (OHR) was established to eradicate discrimination, increase equal opportunity, and protect human rights for persons who live in, work, or visit the District of Columbia. The agency enforces local and federal human rights laws, including the DC Human Rights Act, by providing a legal process to those who believe they have been discriminated against. OHR also

proactively enforces human rights in the District through Director's Inquiries, which allow it to identify and investigate practices and policies that may be discriminatory.

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