



CITY OF BOSTON IN CITY COUNCIL

ORDER FOR A HEARING TO DISCUSS WAYS FOR THE CITY TO INCREASE COMMUNICATIONS ACCESS FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES TO PUBLIC-FACING TELEVISIONS

- WHEREAS:** The lack of communication access to the audio content on TVs in public places has always existed as a barrier for individuals with certain disabilities; *and*,
- WHEREAS:** During the COVID-19 pandemic TV programming played a critical role in conveying information from public health experts and government officials to the public during the state of emergency; *and*,
- WHEREAS:** This new interest in – and necessity of – watching/listening to TV during the COVID-19 pandemic highlighted the striking inequity that exists in communication access for those in the disability community and beyond who have no access to audible TV content when they are in public places; *and*,
- WHEREAS:** For the past year, TV stations have been broadcasting daily/weekly municipal press conferences, important public health updates, breaking news reports, emergency alerts, and other crucial information and timely instructions related to the pandemic, the city’s shut-down and reopening; *and*,
- WHEREAS:** TVs audible content has not been accessible to persons with these types of disabilities: Deaf/deaf, Hard of Hearing, hearing loss due to age or illness, developmental disabilities, sensory disabilities, non-native English speakers, and others; *and*,
- WHEREAS:** When businesses enable the “open captions” function on their TVs, a live transcript of the program’s audio content is shown scrolling across the bottom of the screen; *and*,
- WHEREAS:** Visible captions would eliminate a significant communication barrier for people with hearing loss and other disabilities by providing access to the information being given by speakers on TV programming in all of Boston’s public places; *and*,
- WHEREAS:** Visible captions would also increase access to information for the general public, because TVs are often located in crowded and noisy commercial spaces where everybody may have difficulty hearing; *and*,

NOW THEREFORE BE IT ORDERED:

That the appropriate Committee of the Boston City Council holds a hearing to discuss ways to ensure that closed captioning is enabled on public facing televisions. Representatives from the City of Boston’s Mayor’s Commission for Persons with Disabilities, Human Rights Commission, Mayor’s Office of Economic Development, the Licensing Board, as well as other relevant and interested parties shall be invited to attend.