

# STEIN & VARGAS LLP

Overcoming Barriers | Ensuring Communication | Creating Access

## IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### STRATHMORE DENIES ACCESS TO DEAF THEATER FAN

**Greenbelt, MD** – Christina Kielich of Alexandria, Virginia, filed suit today in federal district court against the Strathmore Hall Foundation, Inc. (“Strathmore”), alleging that the Bethesda-based performing arts venue discriminates based on disability in violation of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. Both the ADA and Section 504 require performing arts venues, such as the Strathmore, to ensure full and equal access to programming for individuals with disabilities. Kielich requires captioning in order to understand performances, yet Strathmore has refused Kielich’s requests.

Kielich studied theater in the drama department at Catholic University, studied Shakespeare at Oxford University, and wrote her senior thesis on the role of women in Greek drama. She is an avid theater fan who enjoys a broad range of cultural events. In 2016, Strathmore refused to provide captioning so Kielich could attend a performance of *Laughter and Reflection with Carol Burnett*. Strathmore has not responded to Kielich’s requests for captioning of an April 2017 pre-concert lecture and performance of *Ladies Sing the Blues*.

“Theater brings incredible joy and meaning to my life,” said Kielich. “No one should be excluded from cultural events because of disability.” Kielich is represented by the National Association of the Deaf and Stein & Vargas, LLP. Howard Rosenblum, CEO of the National Association of the Deaf said, “Twenty-seven years after the Americans with Disabilities Act, there is no excuse for any theater to deny communication access to any consumer. The Strathmore needs to ensure its performances are fully accessible to everyone, including Christina Kielich.”

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National Association of the Deaf is the nation’s premier civil rights organization of, by, and for, deaf and hard of hearing individuals in the United States.

Stein & Vargas, LLP is a civil rights firm based in Washington, D.C. and committed to the principle that all people have full and equal access to all parts of society.

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