



February 20, 2023
Delegate Joe Vogel
224 Lowe House Office Building
6 Bladen Street
Annapolis, MD 21401

RE: HB0795 Commercial Law – Consumer Protection – Ticket Sales (ERAS) Act

Dear Delegate Vogel,

I am writing on behalf of the state-owned Hippodrome Theatre at the France-Merrick Performing Arts Center in Baltimore Maryland in opposition to House Bill 0795. The Hippodrome Theatre is the only venue in Maryland that presents a National Touring Broadway series, including HAMILTON, WICKED, and THE LION KING.

House Bill 0795 is vague, it is anti-venue, anti-presenter, and anti-consumer protection. The bill places unnecessary new regulations on the primary ticketing market. As drafted it will limit the ability of artists, creative teams, producers, and presenters, who take 100% of the artistic and financial risk for their event. These stakeholders strive to ensure tickets go to fans and patrons as opposed to brokers who buy tickets for the sole purpose of reselling them at an exorbitant profit. Additionally, the proposal undermines the terms under which tickets to an artist's or venue's own events may be sold.

This is a case of Maryland event presenters and venues vs. out-of-state scalpers and companies. By banning trusted ticketing methods that help keep tickets at a reasonable price intended for Maryland ticket buyers, there will be significant interference with a robust and dynamic competitive marketplace. This will put out-of-state ticket scalpers ahead of your constituents.

Those supporting this bill frame it as a consumer protection issue. Do not be fooled. To be clear, we are not opposed to legitimate ticket resale. Many ticket buyers enjoy the options available to them on the resale market. We do, however, reject the attempt in the proposal to redefine ticket ownership. The provision of House Bill 0795 will allow brokers to resell tickets with impunity while providing no benefit to the ticket buying public.

Maryland has a thriving entertainment industry that is vital to the state's economy. Artists will avoid Maryland's live performance venues if the General Assembly overturns existing law or places additional, and unnecessary, regulations on Maryland –based venues and producers which benefit out-of-state companies that profit by reselling expensive tickets to Maryland consumers.

Brokers are not consumers, they do not represent the interests of the consumers, and the Maryland General Assembly should not endorse their practices. House Bill 0795 only helps groups supported by resales sites and organizations whose profitability is directly tied to how much they can inflate the price of a ticket resold to patrons and fans. This legislation hurts Maryland consumers and venues like the Hippodrome Theatre, who rely on patrons being able to afford to come to events again and again. We ask you to oppose House Bill 0795.

Sincerely,

Ron Legler
President – France-Merrick Performing Arts Center