



National and Maryland Live Music & Event Organizations Support Maryland's SB539

March 28, 2024

Dear Chair C.T. Wilson, Vice Chair Crosby, Delegates Adams, Amprey, Arentz, Boafó, Charkoufian, Fennell, Fisher, Fletcher Harrison, Fraser-Hidalgo, Howard, Jackson, Johnson, Pippy, Pruski, Qi, Queen, Rogers, Rose, Turner, Valderama, and Wivell,

We write in staunch support of SB539, the Maryland event ticketing legislation, as it has the potential to make Maryland a fierce defender of concert fans. We represent a coalition of live event professionals across the spectrum of entertainment, with representation from the performing arts, artists groups, recorded music, independent ticketing companies, independent concert venues, and promoters and producers. This coalition represents stakeholders who take on all the risk to create once-in-a-lifetime experiences and bring joy, employment, and economic impact to communities across America. We've come together to advocate for fans, to protect them from deceptive and predatory ticketing practices and the price-gouging that has run rampant through the secondary markets, harming fans, artists, and venues alike.

SB539 will codify consumer protections by 1) bringing transparency to ticket prices, 2) banning the sale of "speculative" tickets, which are fake, 3) requiring sellers and resellers to identify the seat number and zone or section of tickets before sale, 4) ensuring that fans who can't make an event can sell their tickets to other fans and 5) commissions a study by The Consumer Protection Division of the Office of the Attorney reviewing the event ticket market, including the sale of fraudulent and deceptive tickets, the use of illegal BOTS by professional brokers, and the cost of event tickets offered to and purchased by consumers on the resale market when compared with the face values on the primary market.

When SB539 is enforced, it will go a long way to ending toxic, predatory practices that fleece music fans.

From the moment a show is announced real fans are faced with a treacherous uphill battle to secure real tickets at the hands of these predatory resellers; initial Google searches often yield purposefully deceptive results with websites posing as the artist or venue, while still other resellers and sites claim to have tickets available for purchase before the event has even gone on sale. If Maryland removes the profit motive from those using illegal BOTS to vacuum up tickets and then posting them for exorbitant prices, more tickets will be available for true fans.

While fans suffer because of this broken system, so do artists. Fans who fall victim to price-gouging are then limited in the number of events they can afford to attend, harming the careers of established and emerging artists.

Predatory resellers view tickets as nothing more than commodities to be traded for outrageous sums, throwing away the cultural and communal value they provide for our society. They exist to undermine the hard work, talent, and livelihoods of artists, inserting themselves as unnecessary and unwanted middlemen who make their money off the backs of the artists and venues who partner to make these events happen. As a result, resale ticket prices on just one platform (Stubhub) have increased by more than 100 percent since 2019 according to Bloomberg, while the face value of tickets has only increased by 10 percent.

For all these reasons and more, legislation like SB539 is vital to protecting fans, preserving equitable access to entertainment, and restoring balance to the currently broken ticketing ecosystem. It is our profound hope that this bill's strength and potential effectiveness is enacted by the state of Maryland and that it will stand as a beacon for fans and an example to other states seeking to pass true consumer protections into law.

Thank you for your consideration,

National Independent Venue Association (NIVA)

I.M.P., Maryland-based Venue Operator and Concert Promoter

Merriweather Post Pavilion

Ramshead Presents

Association of Performing Arts Professionals (APAP)

International Association of Venue Managers (IAVM)

Eventbrite

Music Managers Forum-US (MMF-US)

All Good Presents

National Independent Talent Organization (NITO)

North American Performing Arts Managers and Agents (NAPAMA)

Recording Academy