

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HB 701
Christine Gilroy

I'm Christine Gilroy, a Maryland resident who's been working in venue box offices for more than 17 years. I am in support of HB 701. I've seen the rise of professional scalpers and the BOTS they use to beat real fans to the tickets they deserve, and my co-workers and I have to take time out of every day to help fans who've been scammed by these platforms.

Without this legislation, trying to ensure real fans get tickets instead of scalpers is just a bad game of whack-a-mole. The only way to truly protect consumers is to remove the profit motive, like this bill does. Transferability at face value ensures that fans who can't attend have the option to sell their ticket to someone else who can, so both of them are made whole without being gouged.

These Professional Scalpers know exactly what they're doing - they often try to attack every single show we put on sale, adding tickets into hundreds of different carts all at once.

BOT activity is off the charts and just keeps climbing, even though they were outlawed both locally and federally years ago. We used to identify individual scalpers the old-fashioned way, where you'd catch the same name buying tickets with different credit cards or the same mailing address with different names - but now they're invisible violators.

Just recently one show we put on sale had more than a third of all available tickets purchased by BOTS.

Night after night we talk to fans whose tickets aren't working, only to discover that a scalper has sold the same ticket multiple times across multiple platforms. That ticket only works once, leaving the other customers confused and angry at our doors while blaming the ticket scanner and stopping the flow of fans into the venue, which ends up delaying other patrons in line, too.

When fans get stuck with these fake tickets, they blame our staff and it hurts our reputation. We try to calm them down and explain how to contact whoever they purchased from to file for a refund or a chargeback. Still, those refunds don't even begin to cover the fans' transportation costs, their accommodations, or their disappointment at missing the show.

These problems arise at almost every show, and time after time we hear that they "just clicked the first result on Google." Well, when you Google a show, like "Brooks & Dunn Merriweather Tickets", the entire first page is clogged with results from scalpers. Merriweather's official website doesn't even appear until you scroll down.

Scalpers are even selling tickets for shows before they're on sale, meaning that when people fall victim to those Google ads, those are the only tickets they can find. They don't know they're not real, and they don't know they're being gouged.

The whole process is incredibly misleading and stacked against real fans, so thank you Chair Wilson for sponsoring this bill and thank you all for listening. Everyone who works in a box office is begging you to pass this bill.