

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HB 701

Eric Baker

I'm Eric Baker, an artist manager with 35 years of experience, whose roster includes Jefferson Starship, Bell Biv DeVoe, and Skid Row and have managed many other iconic artists. I'm absolutely in favor of HB 701.

We all want a fair and transparent ticketing ecosystem that benefits artists, venues, promoters, and, most importantly, fans, and the abuses by scalpers in the current market environment are not only unfair for customers, but leech resources away from artists as well.

My artists want their shows to be accessible to all fans, not just those with the deepest pockets. When scalpers swoop in and purchase these tickets before real fans can, with the intention of gouging the audience, they're making a profit off the music my artists have created and off of the relationships my artist has built with their fans.

Scalpers add absolutely nothing to the marketplace - all they do is stand as a middleman with the intention of leeching our fans of their hard earned cash. The scalpers have no involvement in making the music, and they have no involvement in making the show happen. All they do is stand between fans and a fair price - the price that my artists have decided on. Plus, every additional dollar spent on a scalped ticket is a dollar less that fans are able to spend on music, on merch, and on other shows - that hurts artists terribly.

When fans purchase tickets from scalpers, they disrupt the artists' control over their own tickets and distribution channels. Some tickets are meant for specific audiences, like fan clubs. Others are for meet & greets, and it's incredibly important that artist teams know who's on the roster for a meet & greet beforehand. When that ticket gets scalped, it could go to anyone, which could, potentially, be dangerous.

Look, artists love their fans. Their entire career to date has depended on them, as does their future. They hate seeing them suffer like this. It's heartbreaking to hear of any fan who purchases a ticket only to show up and find out that it's fake, and it's heartbreaking to hear of any fan who spent hundreds or thousands above face value because they didn't know they weren't buying direct from the box office and thought that was the price the artist decided on.

We know our shows are popular, or at least we hope they are. But just because demand is so high does not give these predatory third parties the right to come in and gouge our fans, while offering nothing in return. They'd claim they're providing that fan with the ticket they missed out on at the on-sale, but why do you think the fan missed it the first time around? It's because the scalper was there first, lurking, and using unfair tactics to beat real fans to the punch.

We need HB 701 everywhere, to protect fans and make sure that value is going to those who earn it - not those who take it.