

February 20, 2024

Support HB 701 with amendments

For 129 years, Lyric Baltimore has provided the people of the Baltimore region and the State of Maryland with world class entertainment on our historic stage. We strongly support protecting ticket purchasers from the unscrupulous actors who prey upon our patrons.

Speculative ticketing is a scourge of our industry. When a ticket buyer comes to our venue with problematic tickets, they take out their frustration on our staff and attack our good name, even though we had nothing to do with the fraudulent ticket sale. The ticket buyer has been the victim of bad actors, usually from out of state, and sadly have no recourse.

As a ticket issuer, we want to be the place, either online or in person, where tickets for our venue are purchased. That is the only way we can guarantee that the ticket is legitimate. Further that direct connection allows the Lyric to contact the ticket purchaser with “Know Before You Go” information regarding special conditions set by the artist or promoter, or local road closures or other local impacts. The contact information supplied at purchase is the only way Lyric Baltimore can advise of a delay, postponement, or cancellation.

While Lyric Baltimore supports the aims of this bill, there are problems that the sponsor can address through amendments. Here are two suggested amendments.

- 1) **Strike page 3 Section C lines 16-19.** This section is impractical and burdensome for the venue. As a non-profit with two full-time box-office employees, requiring Lyric Baltimore to receive and store information from an unknown number of ticket sellers regarding resold tickets is unacceptable. This bill places the substantial burden of an unknown number of hours of time on our staff, an unknown and uncompensated expense on our non-profit and the impossible task of the verification of an unknown number of ticket purchasers and third-party resellers. I ask that this section be stricken from this bill.
- 2) **Add significant funding for the Attorney General’s office.** Currently the State of Maryland has legislation on its books banning bots and predatory websites, yet neither of these laws is enforced. The reason stated by both the prior and current Attorney General is that they lack the financial resources for staffing to tackle these issues. Without adding funding for positions dedicated to identifying and prosecuting bad actors in the ticketing marketplace, this bill, like its predecessors, will be well intentioned and unenforced.