



**HIPPODROME  
THEATRE** *at the*

**FRANCE-MERRICK**  
PERFORMING ARTS CENTER

March 26, 2024

Honorable C.T. Wilson  
Chair of the House Economic Matters Committee  
231 House Office Building  
6 Bladen Street  
Annapolis MD 21401

Re: Senate Bill SB539 - Commercial Law - Consumer Protection – Sale and Resale of Tickets

Dear Chair Wilson and Members of the Economic Matters Committee:

My name is Ron Legler, President of the France-Merrick Performing Arts Center/Hippodrome Theatre in Baltimore, Maryland. The Hippodrome, the sole National Touring Broadway Series venue in our state, proudly serves as a member of the Maryland Sports & Entertainment Industry Coalition.

The Hippodrome Theatre expresses gratitude for the opportunity to submit this letter in support of Senate Bill SB539.

We applaud and support the bill's aim to enhance transparency in ticket purchasing. Initiatives like mandatory disclosure of total price breakdowns and speculative ticketing practices in the secondary market align with our values. In fact, the Hippodrome has proactively implemented all-inclusive pricing since 2016, demonstrating our commitment to fair and upfront costs for patrons. In addition, all too often, we encounter honest people who come to our venue expecting to see a show, only to find that the ticket they purchased was fake and they were duped by a predatory broker. In these situations, it is heartbreaking to see the customers' disappointment and embarrassment when they learn that they do not have a valid ticket and they did not buy from the venue's official sites. As a venue operator, we do our best never to turn away someone who has come to see our shows. Our box office scrambles to try to find the patron tickets to buy a second time and helps them navigate doing a credit card charge back on their original purchase, all while servicing the needs of thousands of patrons entering our doors for the same show. To put it mildly, it is a hassle for all involved. As a venue, we are in the business of providing experiences and memories to last a lifetime. When a visit to our theatre is ruined by fraudulent sales, it casts a negative shadow on our relationship with the consumer because trust is lost – even though we were not the bad actor. We are therefore appreciative of your action to further protect consumers of live entertainment and the arts in Maryland.

In order to ensure that Maryland remains a competitive and attractive marketplace for Broadway, concerts, comedy, dance, sports and other entertainment attractions, we strongly



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support the Senate's elimination of resale price caps from the bill and we ask that the House preserve that amendment. Resale caps or the imposition of other restrictions on secondary market pricing and service fees would infringe upon consumers' resale rights and disrupt the delicate balance within the ticketing ecosystem.

**Additionally, it is crucial to remember that major touring productions, concerts, and sporting events have venue selection options.** Resale price caps could incentivize prominent promoters and artists to bypass Maryland in favor of other states, including neighboring Washington D.C., potentially impacting our local economy and cultural landscape.

**We urge you to consider our concerns and continue to refrain from implementing price controls and fee caps to maintain market flexibility.** By collaborating, we can achieve the shared goal of protecting consumers while safeguarding the vitality of Maryland's vibrant entertainment industry.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Ron Legler

President, France-Merrick Performing Arts Center/Hippodrome