

Good morning, and thank you for the opportunity to speak today.

My name is Lauren Wayne, President of State Theatre Presents - a venue operator and concert promoter based in Portland, Maine. I operate multiple live event venues and produce over 150 concerts each year, working with artists at every level - from emerging acts to major touring artists. My business depends on one simple principle: getting tickets into the hands of real fans at fair, accessible prices.

I'm here today to strongly support Vermont House Bill 512's proposed ticketing legislation, particularly the provision that cap resale at 10% above face value.

I have firsthand experience operating under Maine's LD 913 framework, and I can say clearly and without hesitation: it works.

Before these protections were in place, we saw the same pattern over and over again. Tickets would go on sale, and within seconds, a significant portion would be scooped up by predatory resellers and brokers using automated tools and bulk purchasing tactics. Those tickets would immediately reappear on secondary marketplaces at two, three, sometimes five times the original price. The people who lost were not the resellers - they were fans, families, and Mainers priced out of experiences that were intended to be accessible.

And while it's easy to focus on the impact to consumers, it's equally important to understand that artists and venues are directly harmed by this system.

When a ticket is resold at a massive markup, that additional revenue does not go to the artist who created the work, nor to the venue or the people producing and paying for all the expenses that make an event happen. That additional revenue from this price gouging goes to a third-party speculator who had no role in creating the experience. Meanwhile, artists are often under pressure to keep their face-value ticket prices reasonable and accessible to their fans. The result is a system where artists intentionally price tickets lower to maintain accessibility, only to see that goodwill exploited and monetized by resellers.

In many cases, this also creates a perception problem for the artist and venue. Fans see inflated resale prices and assume the artist and/or venue is responsible, when in reality the artist and venue are losing control, potential revenue and communication with the fan. It erodes trust between artists, venues and their audiences, which is the most important relationships in the live event ecosystem.

As well, when tickets are resold at inflated prices, that excess revenue doesn't stay in our communities - it leaves the state entirely. Instead of supporting local venues, workers, and surrounding businesses, those dollars are captured by out-of-state predatory brokers and resale platforms who have no stake in the local economy.

Since the passage of LD 913 in Maine, we have seen a real, meaningful shift.

By reinforcing that a ticket is a revocable license, the law restores a basic truth: a ticket is permission to attend an event under terms set by the artist and the issuer. It is not an open-ended financial instrument to be exploited. This clarity has allowed us to implement policies that prioritize real fans - things like still allowing transferability but enforcing resale caps to keep tickets accessible, and identifying bad actors who attempt to game the system.

The result has been overwhelmingly positive.

More tickets are reaching actual fans at the intended price. We've seen a drastic decrease of bot usage and fewer instances of extreme price gouging on the predatory resale market. Customer trust has improved, because buyers feel more confident that the price they see is fair and not artificially inflated. And importantly, we've been better able to support the broader local ecosystem - the restaurants, hotels, and small businesses around us that benefit when real people attend shows, not when tickets are flipped for profit.

I also want to address directly the argument that resale should be treated as a "free market."

This framing is misleading.

A true free market assumes a level playing field. The ticket resale market is anything but that. It is dominated by sophisticated operators with access to technology, capital, and scale that individual consumers simply do not have. Bots, speculative buying, and inventory hoarding distort the market long before an average fan ever has a chance to participate.

What this legislation does is not eliminate resale or transferability-it simply sets reasonable guardrails to prevent exploitation. A 10% cap still allows flexibility for consumers who can't attend an event, while removing the incentive for predatory speculation.

That's not anti-market. It's pro-consumer, pro-fairness and pro-local economy.

As someone who has dedicated my career to live events, I can tell you that the long-term health of this industry depends on trust. If fans feel consistently priced out or taken advantage of, they disengage. And when that happens, everyone loses - artists, venues, and communities alike.

This legislation helps restore that trust.

It ensures that the primary purpose of a ticket remains what it should be: access to a shared cultural experience.

I urge you to support this bill and to stand with consumers, artists, and local businesses by creating a more transparent, fair, and accountable ticketing system in Vermont.