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For immediate release: Feb. 7, 2014

General Assembly acts to protect consumers from ticket-buying abuses

BALTIMORE, MD: The Maryland Consumer Rights Coalition (MCRC), a statewide coalition of individuals and organizations that advance fairness and justice for Maryland consumers, today applauded the Maryland General Assembly for passing legislation outlawing the use of automated ticket buying software (bots). The House bill (HB98), sponsored by Del. Sam Arora, passed its final reading on a unanimous vote today. The Senate's version of the same bill (SB154), introduced by Sen. Brian Feldman, was approved unanimously by that chamber on Jan. 29.

"Maryland consumers are grateful to Del. Arora, Sen. Feldman and their colleagues for leveling the playing field for consumers buying live-event tickets," said Marceline White, MCRC's Executive Director. "Too often, Maryland fans are left out of their favorite live events because unscrupulous ticket brokers use bots to buy large blocks of tickets in seconds. Maryland now joins a growing number of states that outlaw bots and give consumers a better chance to buy tickets at face value."

If the bill is signed into law by the governor, Maryland will join 12 other states that have outlawed ticket bots (including California, Florida, Indiana, Minnesota, New Jersey, New York, North Carolina, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Tennessee, Vermont, and Virginia). However, bots are just one of the troubling issues facing consumers when they purchase live entertainment and sports event tickets.

"This legislation is a great first step in making the ticket buying process more consumer-friendly," Marceline White noted. "But while bots represent a serious consumer concern, there are other widespread industry practices that make it difficult for consumers to purchase and use event tickets.

"We call on the legislature to continue to work to make sure ticket sellers are honest with consumers about the number of tickets available to the public and to ensure that consumers have the right to transfer their tickets however they choose," White said.

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The Maryland Consumer Rights Coalition (MCRC) is a statewide advocacy groups that protects and advances the interests of Maryland consumers through research, education, and advocacy. Find MCRC on the web at www.marylandconsumers.org, on Facebook at facebook.com/mdconsumers and on Twitter at twitter.com/mdconsumers.