

Act Now to Curb Outrageous Service Fees from Ticketmaster and other ticket agencies

Dear Consumer Advocate,

Last March, MCRC protested the City Council's failure to enforce all of Baltimore City's anti-scalping law against Ticketmaster and other giant ticket sellers. Before that council vote, Maryland's Court of Appeals had found Ticketmaster guilty of violating the city's anti-scalping law. The penalty amounted to \$1,000 per violation -- meaning that the ticketing behemoth could owe Baltimore City up to half a million dollars in fines.

But instead of collecting that money, the City Council voted to exempt giant ticket firms from the law while the council reviewed it. Yet city residents who re-sold tickets for above the face value of the ticket could still be charged and fined.

To learn more:

- [Read MCRC's testimony protesting special treatment for Ticketmaster here:](http://www.marylandconsumers.org/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=y1fWBojVLrY%3d&tabid=38) <http://www.marylandconsumers.org/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=y1fWBojVLrY%3d&tabid=38>
- [Read Baltimore Brew's report on the council exempting the ticket giant from the law here:](http://www.baltimorebrew.com/2013/03/11/ticketmaster-exempted-from-city-anti-scalping-law/) <http://www.baltimorebrew.com/2013/03/11/ticketmaster-exempted-from-city-anti-scalping-law/>

On Monday, City Councilman Carl Stokes introduced a new bill to replace the current anti-scalping law. The bill would cap add-on fees to 15% of the first \$50 of a ticket fee, 10% of the cost between \$50 and \$150, and 5% of any fees over \$150. Those fees could add up to \$7.50 to the cost of a \$50 ticket and \$12.50 to a \$100 ticket.

The bill also requires all ticket sellers to display the full price of the ticket (including all service and add-on fees) prominently on the ticket itself, in any advertisements for the event, and at any box office or website that sells tickets, and to itemize all fees at the point of sale.

You can [read more about the new bill here](#)

All-in-one pricing would do more to help consumers

While those fee caps and disclosures would be a step forward for city consumers, the all-in-one ticket pricing system Ticketmaster uses in Arkansas and other places would

do more do promote competition and cut service fees for city ticket buyers. Under that system, consumers see all ticket fees as part of the price for the ticket itself.

And Baltimore City officials have yet to collect the hundreds of thousands of dollars Ticketmaster may owe for violating the city’s anti-scalping law.

City residents are facing big hikes in water and sewer fees even as the city is slashing spending in many areas to balance its budget. So why is the city ignoring this obvious source of much-needed revenue?

The date for the hearing on this bill will likely be set next week – but the time to act is NOW: Ticketmaster has hired a high-priced lobbyist to make its case to City Council Members. Council Members need to hear from YOU.

Tell them to:

- Include all-in-one pricing for all tickets sold in the city in the bill.
- Collect any fines Ticketmaster owes for past ticket law violations.
- Require that all entertainment venues and ticket sellers confirm they are paying the 10% amusement due on all ticket and service fees.

You can [find contact information for your City Council member here:](#)

Thank you for all you do to protect Maryland consumers,

Marceline

HERE’S A DRAFT EMAIL YOU CAN SEND TO COUNCIL MEMBERS

Dear Council Member X:

It is time for Ticketmaster and other ticketing agencies to stop charging consumers outrageous service fees to attend a concert, play, or other event. Councilman Stokes’ ticket bill is a step in the right direction. But this bill could be made stronger by instituting “all-in-one” pricing on tickets that would increase competition and is likely to lead to lower service charges for consumers.

At a time when city officials are proposing exorbitant rate hikes on water and sewage, we also urge you to hold Ticketmaster accountable for violating Baltimore’s anti-

scalping ordinance. Ticketmaster should pay Baltimore City the fines owed to the city.

Finally, we urge that the bill be amended to require proof that all ticketing agencies and entertainment venues have paid Baltimore City the amusement taxes that are required by law.