NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

James Skoufis

Skoufis Announces Investigation into Live Event Ticketing Industry, Sends Letter to AG

JAMES SKOUFIS April 16, 2020

ISSUE: **CORONAVIRUS**, **TICKET SALES**, **TICKET RESELLING**, **CORPORATIONS**

COMMITTEE: **INVESTIGATIONS AND GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS**

Says urgency is now more evident given deceptive practices in wake of Coronavirus Pandemic

Senator James Skoufis (D-Hudson Valley), Chair of the Senate Investigations and Government Operations Committee, announced the committee launched an investigation into live event ticketing practices earlier this year, an effort that has taken on a new urgency in light of the Coronavirus pandemic. Skoufis additionally sent the attached letter to Attorney General Letitia James seeking a formal inquiry into alleged impropriety by Ticketmaster which suddenly changed their reimbursement policy amidst the public health emergency.

Questionable practices and an interest in streamlining a convoluted, user-unfriendly system led Skoufis to launch the investigation earlier this year. On March 5, 2020, the Investigations and Government Operations Committee sent document requests to several ticketing industry stakeholders seeking information on their respective policies and practices.

As the Coronavirus pandemic has halted the operations of many businesses across the world including the live event industry, thousands of concerts, shows, and sporting events have been cancelled or postponed; this has led to a justifiable increase in refund requests from ticket holders. Disturbingly, some actors in the ticketing industry have advanced abusive practices. One such example, which is the subject of Skoufis' letter to the Attorney General, is Ticketmaster which abruptly changed its reimbursement policy amidst the pandemic. Previously, reimbursements were offered if an event was "postponed, rescheduled or canceled" whereas, after the sudden change, refunds are now only offered if an event is canceled; if an event is indefinitely postponed, as has often been the case during the

pandemic, concerns are mounting that reimbursements will not be issued.

“While many of us have been sewing masks for friends and family, donating blood, delivering groceries to the elderly, and caring for others, some in the live event ticket industry have been silently altering policies to avoid repaying consumers,” **said Senator James Skoufis.** “Deceptively changing the language of refund policies and excluding postponed or rescheduled events are forms of corporate robbery; withholding billions of dollars that many now need to survive this pandemic is the antithesis of corporate social responsibility. I ask the Attorney General to intervene in any means necessary, including a criminal inquiry, and strongly urge these corporations to reconsider their newly adopted policies and refund consumers who are struggling to survive. These new issues will certainly be incorporated into our Senate committee's broader investigation into the industry to ensure consumers are always put first."

The following primary and secondary ticket marketplaces have received document requests from Skoufis' investigative team and whose participation has been requested at a forthcoming hearing. The hearing was previously scheduled for April but will be rescheduled in the coming months.

American Express

Anschutz Entertainment Group (owns AXS)

Barclays Center & Brooklyn Nets

Buffalo Bills

Chase

Citibank

Jujamcyn Theatres

Live Nation Entertainment (owns Ticketmaster)

Madison Square Garden & the New York Knicks

Nederlander Organization

New York Yankees

Saratoga Performing Arts Center (we already received their response)

Seatgeek

Shubert Organization

StubHub

The John Gore Organization (Broadway.com)

TicketNetwork

Tickets.com

Today Tix

Vivid Seats

This is the fourth, announced investigation to come out of the Investigations and Government Operations Committee under Senator Skoufis' chairmanship. In the past year and a half, the Committee has been course-corrected to undertake real investigations and produce meaningful and substantive oversight that all New Yorkers benefit from.

###