

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

April 16, 2020

Michael Rapino, President and CEO
Live Nation
9348 Civic Center Drive
Beverly Hills, CA

Amy Howe, President and COO
Ticketmaster
9348 Civic Center Drive
Beverly Hills, CA

Dear Mr. Rapino and Ms. Howe:

We write to you today incredulous at Ticketmaster's announced policy to refuse refunds to all requesting fans for ticketed events postponed by the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. With Americans weathering the brutal and continuing impacts of this global crisis, your decision to confiscate their money is reprehensible and should be reversed immediately.

As the United States is battling the worst outbreak of this virus in the world, the effect on regular Americans has been cataclysmic. Nearly 20 million working Americans have filed for unemployment, with those tragic numbers expected to climb.ⁱ Countless small businesses remain shuttered. Millennials find themselves in the second financial crash of their lives through no fault of their own.ⁱⁱ

Many of these suffering Americans are your customers. Their burden in the coming months is heavy. But instead of helping them lift that burden, your company has decided to make it heavier. Ticketmaster's webpage announces at the top in bold red letters that "Refunds are available if your event is canceled,"ⁱⁱⁱ which gives fans no avenue to get their money back for events that have been indefinitely postponed. Incredibly, a New York Times report found that this same Ticketmaster webpage used to read that refunds "are available if your event is postponed, rescheduled or canceled" and was quietly changed.^{iv} In response, Ticketmaster has asserted that the change was made for "clarity," and your company then deflected responsibility to event organizers.^v

Your claim that Ticketmaster's refund policy was not changed but clarified is so absurd it insults the intelligence of your customers. Furthermore, given your enormous power over the marketplace, your company's assertions that this inability to obtain a full refund for postponed events shows rings hollower than a drum. In effect, your company is holding hostage money that could constitute a rent check, electric bill, or groceries to feed children.

There is no question that this crisis is badly hurting members of the live events community, from promising artists, to striving promoters, small venue owners, set designers, concessionaires, and others. But given your market power, your responsibility to customers is broad. We request answers to the below questions:

- Please explain in detail when the language in Ticketmaster’s COVID-19 refunding policy was altered.
- To date, please detail the total number of tickets that were purchased for events now postponed, the total number of ticket purchasers that have requested refunds, and the total number that has been denied by Ticketmaster.
- Please provide the total value of the denied refunds.
- Please specify each event organizer Ticketmaster has contacted regarding refunds. Please outline the request Ticketmaster has made and the organizer’s response.
- Has Ticketmaster sought or will Ticketmaster seek any federal economic assistance considering the COVID-19 pandemic?

At the time of the Department of Justice’s disastrous decision to allow Live Nation and Ticketmaster to merge in 2010, Mr. Rapino called the event “a good and exciting day for the music business” that would “transform the way artists distribute their content and fans can access that content.”^{vi} Do you both believe that your refusal to issue refunds to Americans suffering during a pandemic in the exciting spirit of helping fans access your content?

Given this national emergency, we call on your company to show consideration to its customers and issue full refunds to all who request them.

Sincerely,



Bill Pascrell, Jr.
Member of Congress



Katie Porter
Member of Congress

ⁱ See <https://www.politico.com/news/2020/04/09/coronavirus-unemployment-claims-numbers-176794>

ⁱⁱ See <https://www.theatlantic.com/ideas/archive/2020/04/millennials-are-new-lost-generation/609832/>

ⁱⁱⁱ https://help.ticketmaster.com/s/article/How-do-I-get-a-refund?language=en_US. The link reads that as of 12:54pm on April 15, 2020, in case it is changed again.

^{iv} <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/04/08/arts/music/ticketmaster-refunds-coronavirus.html>

^v <https://www.usatoday.com/story/entertainment/music/2020/04/13/coronavirus-ticketmaster-changes-refund-policy-sparks-outrage/2986708001/>

^{vi} <https://consequenceofsound.net/2010/01/merger-approved-say-hello-to-live-nation-tickemaster/>;
<https://www.wired.com/2010/01/doj-approves-modified-ticketmaster-live-nation-merger/>