

Theatre Owners of New England
PO Box 920
South Wellfleet, MA 02663-0920
johnvincenttone@gmail.com

Corporations Committee
Rhode Island General Assembly
State House
Providence, RI 02903

February 10, 2025

RE: HB 5247, RELATING TO COMMERCIAL LAW -- GENERAL REGULATORY PROVISIONS
--DECEPTIVE TRADE PRACTICES

Dear Chairperson Solomon and Members of the Corporations Committee:

On behalf of movie theaters operating in the Great State of Rhode Island, I appreciate the opportunity to submit testimony regarding legislation under consideration that seeks to regulate online ticketing fees. While Theatre Owners of New England supports efforts to promote transparency and fairness in consumer transactions, we urge you to recognize that movie theatres do not engage in deceptive pricing practices and should be exempted from this proposed regulation.

Movie Ticket Fees Are Transparent, Not Deceptive

Cinemas provide clear and upfront disclosure of any convenience fees before a consumer completes an online ticket purchase. These fees are separately itemized and are not disguised as hidden costs. Unlike industries where consumers have no choice but to pay additional fees, moviegoers retain the option to purchase tickets at the box office without incurring any extra charges. In fact, the majority of Main Street moviegoers prefer this method, ensuring a fee-free ticket purchase experience.

Online Movie Ticket Fees Are Not "Junk Fees"

- **Transparency:** Consumers see convenience fees before they finalize their purchase.
- **Choice:** The option to buy tickets in person without a fee ensures fairness and flexibility.
- **Service-Based Fee:** These modest fees—typically well below \$2.00—support essential services, including secure payment processing, website maintenance,

and customer support. They are not arbitrary charges designed to extract additional revenue.

Potential Unintended Consequences of Regulation

Mandating that theatres include convenience fees in the advertised price could mislead consumers into thinking box office ticket prices are higher than they actually are. This confusion could discourage in-person ticket sales, ultimately harming consumers who prefer cash transactions or who rely on discount promotions. Additionally, standardizing ticket pricing across all sales channels could lead to increased costs, particularly for lower-income patrons.

Impact on Small and Independent Theatres

Most movie theatres, particularly independent cinemas and nonprofit venues, operate on razor-thin margins. New regulatory burdens would increase operational costs and compliance expenses, threatening the viability of small businesses and reducing entertainment access for communities across Rhode Island. In rural and underserved areas, theatre closures would significantly impact local economies and cultural opportunities.

For these reasons, I respectfully request that the Committee consider exempting movie theatres from this legislation. Rather than imposing unnecessary burdens on an industry that already ensures transparency and consumer choice, legislative efforts should focus on industries where fees are truly unavoidable and misleading.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I welcome any questions and would be happy to provide further insights into this matter.

Sincerely,



John Vincent
Theatre Owners of New England