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Friday, October 22, 2021

Federal Maritime Commission

To Whom It May Concern:

First, thank you for taking this on. There are many of us who planned exciting trips with cruise lines (mine was Royal Caribbean) and even though I've been a loyalty member for years, their policies changed from the date of booking to the date of cancelation, and then again afterward with no notice to their customers. Worse, it's nearly impossible to get in touch with anyone at Royal Caribbean. It's an hour hold time or more to get to a first level call center that can only respond to the script they've been given – which is that you can cruise within a limited time or you lose your money. I've attempted to be elevated to the next level response by phone and after two attempts (one 60 additional minutes on hold, the other over 90 minutes on hold) the calls were simply disconnected and when you call back, you go into the queue for the first level call center again. I've emailed their customer service and filled out their online forms. It took 5 weeks for them to respond the first time and they simply said the same thing. I responded and explained my circumstance and asked them to honor their commitment to me, the response to that email took almost 8 weeks and merely said that they "respectfully declined" and said they "hoped I would join them on a future cruise".

Royal Caribbean unrolled their "Cruise with Confidence" campaign in early 2020 in response to the COVID pandemic and I was told that if the cruise was canceled I could choose to get a 100% refund or if I chose to leave the money on the account I would receive a 125% Future Cruise Credit (FCC). When I asked what would happen if I could not cruise before the end of 2021 (the original time to use the credit) I was told that I could simply request a refund and would receive the full refund paid for the cruise and excursions. I paid a total of $3,416.46.

Due to COVID, I lost work and depleted my savings. I requested a full refund and was told that I can only use the FCC (issued half in my name, and half in my guest's name). I am no longer with that other person, and then requested to recover the full amount into my own name and they told me the other person has to sign a paper to return it to me. Yet I paid in full with my credit card. So my choice is to use 50% (~$1,700) of what was paid for to sail on a cruise when I don't have work and can't pay for food (which is a horrible idea for so many reasons) or lose all of my money. They offer no other options, no way to contest it, no contact options, and are simply stealing my money on a service THEY canceled. I'm due a full refund and will continue to pursue this through legal channels, but I truly hope you will create legislation that requires them to protect the customers, similar to the airlines.

Respectfully submitted,

Dr. David Mather