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OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR
DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE AND CONSUMER AFFAIRS

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Testimony of the Department of Commerce and Consumer Affairs

**Before the
House Committee on Consumer Protection and Commerce
Wednesday, March 13, 2024
2:05 p.m.
Conference Room 329 and Videoconference**

**On the following measure:
S.B. 2170, S.D. 1, RELATING TO COMBAT SPORTS**

Chair Nakashima and Members of the Committees:

My name is James Skizewski, and I am the Executive Officer of the Boxing Commission and Mixed Martial Arts Program (Program) of the Department of Commerce and Consumer Affairs' (Department) Professional Vocational Licensing Division (Division). The Department supports the intent of this bill, which establishes a Combat Sports Commission (Commission), and offers comments.

The purpose of this bill is to establish a new regulatory framework for combat sports contests by renaming the existing Boxing Commission of Hawaii as the Combat Sports Commission of Hawaii, expanding the Commission's jurisdiction to include combat sports, and repealing existing law that governs mixed martial arts contests in Hawaii.

The Department appreciates the consideration of combining the regulation of mixed martial arts and boxing under a single commission titled the Combat Sports

Commission of Hawaii. This expansion would ease administration costs on the Department and provide flexibility to the Commission to address all combat sports. However, the bill, as currently written does not address many issues related to combat sports which are essential to the regulation of mixed martial arts and are currently included in Hawaii Revised Statutes (HRS) chapter 440E, Mixed Martial Arts Contests.

The Department requests the following amendments:

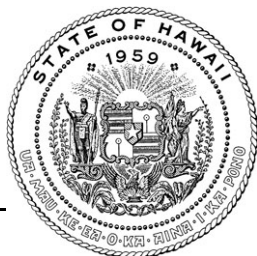
1. That the regulations related to amateur mixed martial arts athletes, the control of amateur mixed martial arts contests, and the requirement of bloodwork be included in the bill. The requirement of annual bloodwork under HRS chapter 440E-5 guarantees health standards are maintained across all contestants. Prior to any contest, a contestant must provide results of HIV and hepatitis testing within the last six (6) months. This requirement, combined with a medical report of a medical examination completed provides adequate safeguards to ensure the Department and contestants hold mixed martial arts events among medically fit contestants.
2. Broaden the definition of “combat sports” to allow the commission the flexibility to regulate all combat sports events such as PowerSlap and bare-knuckle combat. The Department suggests the definition of “combat sports” be defined as:

“Combat sports” means unarmed combat involving the use, subject to any applicable limitations set forth in this chapter, of a combination of techniques from different disciplines of boxing or martial arts, including, without limitation, grappling, kicking, and striking.”
3. Page 7, lines 17 to 21, continued to page 8, lines 1 to 6, the Department recommends that: (a) the composition of any board or commission be an odd numbered of members; and (b) that at least one (1) member on this Commission be a public member.
4. Page 9, §440-7 Other employees. The Department requests that the employment of inspectors be removed. Instead, inspectors shall be

- appointed by the director or commission similar to the current process established in HRS chapter 440E.
5. The Department has concerns with the amendments to HRS chapter 440-9 as the removal of boxing from the statute may be interpreted to preclude boxing from regulation. The Department suggests instead that boxing be explicitly included in HRS chapter 440-9, or the definition of boxing be removed to allow the definition of combat sports to include all unarmed combat.
 6. Currently HRS chapter 440E provides a provision, which allows the control of amateur contests to be placed under the supervision of a national association. This provision allows the Director the flexibility to utilize approved experienced national associations to supervise amateur events in accordance with national standards. This flexibility is provided currently to boxing through the USA Boxing in HRS chapter 440. The Department requests that this flexibility be extended to all combat sports.
 7. Add definitions to the bill related to “amateur combat sports contestants” and “amateur combat sports contest.” These definitions will provide the Commission with clear guidance in relation to the regulation of amateur athletes. It is common practice in other states for an entire combat sports event to revolve around the development of local amateur athletes. Without clear guidance, it is unclear if the Commission will have jurisdiction over amateur events as outlined on page 13, line 9.
 8. Provide further flexibility to the licensed combat sports physician servicing combat sports events and contestants as it relates to the requirement listed on page 14, line 3, by changing the requirement from one (1) to three (3) hours. Contestants arrive at various times, including during contests. At the time of the event, the physician’s sole focus is on the active contest. The expansion of the period related to the pre-fight examination will allow physicians the flexibility to meet the requirement between contests or during intermissions.

9. The Department requests at a minimum, a delayed implementation of at least two (2) years to ensure that:
 - a. In line with the request above, the Division would have appropriate time to establish, recruit, and hire the full-time position employees to facilitate such a commission;
 - b. The appropriate updates are made to the Division's database;
 - c. The Governor has the appropriate time to appoint members to the Commission; and
 - d. There is no disruption in planned events.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this bill.



**DEPARTMENT OF BUSINESS,
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & TOURISM**
KA 'OIHANA HO'OMOHALA PĀ'OIHANA, 'IMI WAIWAI
A HO'OMĀKA'IKA'I

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Statement of
JAMES KUNANE TOKIOKA
Director
Department of Business, Economic Development, and Tourism
before the
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON CONSUMER PROTECTION & COMMERCE

Wednesday, March 13, 2024
2:05 PM
State Capitol, Conference Room 329

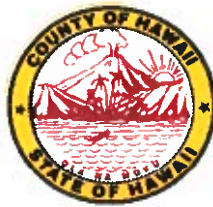
In consideration of
SB 2170, SD1
RELATING TO COMBAT SPORTS.

Chair Nakashima, Vice Chair Sayama, and members of the Committee.

The Department of Business, Economic Development and Tourism (DBEDT) supports the intent of SB 2170, SD1, which establishes a new regulatory framework for combat sports contests in Hawai'i by renaming the existing Boxing Commission of Hawai'i as the Combat Sports Commission of Hawai'i.

DBEDT is in agreement that the Commission's jurisdiction should be expanded to include all combat sports, which incorporates techniques from boxing, wrestling, judo, jujitsu, karate, Muay Thai, etc., allowing oversight to not only boxing but others as described in the measure. The State of Hawai'i has produced many champions in various disciplines of combat sports including Angela Lee and Max Holloway, just to name two very popular champions. This measure will allow for the continued growth of the combat sports industry and to attract events to the State.

Mahalo for the opportunity to support this measure.



Mitchell D. Roth
Mayor

Deanna S. Sako
Managing Director

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Deputy Managing Director

County of Hawai'i
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March 11, 2024

Committee on Consumer Protection and Commerce
Rep. Mark M. Nakashima, Chair
Rep. Jackson D. Sayama, Vice Chair

Hawai'i State Legislature
415 S. Beretania Street
Honolulu, Hawai'i 96813

Subject: S.B. 2170, SD 1 - RELATING TO COMBAT SPORTS
Hearing Date: Wednesday, March 13, 2024, at 2:05 p.m
Time/Place of Hearing: Via Videoconference, Conference Room 329

Aloha Chair Nakashima, Vice Chair Sayama, and members of the Committee on Consumer Protection and Commerce,

On behalf of the County of Hawai'i, I express my support for S.B. 2170, SD1. This measure will establish the Combat Sports Commission of Hawai'i, and provide for regulation of combat sports. The measure seeks to prohibit no rules combat or similar contests and establishes a Combat Sports Commission Special Fund.

The establishment of this Commission as a regulatory body will serve to ensure the safety and well-being of participating athletes, enforce safety measures, and provide a structured platform to organize and regulate competitions, ensuring fair play, integrity, and adherence to established rules, protocols, and standards. Implementing a Combat Sports Commission assures that events involve adequately trained and licensed personnel, contributing to the overall legitimacy of the sports system here in Hawai'i.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of S.B. 2170, SD1. Please feel free to contact me with any questions.

Sincerely,

Mitchell D. Roth
Mayor / County of Hawai'i



March 13, 2024

Bill SB-2170

[IN SUPPORT]
[ON BEHALF OF NOKANET]

Aloha Chair, Committee Members,

I'm Martin Han, and I'm here in support of Bill SB-2170.

Addressing previous shortcomings, we want to emphasize our opposition to merging the MMA and boxing commissions as it overlooks the fundamental differences between these two distinct sports.

We strongly recommend maintaining separate commissions for each discipline to safeguard & protect the athletes.

Mahalo for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Martin Han

Martin Han

Martin@nokanet.com

Honorable Members of the Committee,

I stand before you today in full support of the intent behind Bill SB-2170, which aims to establish a dedicated combat sports commission for Hawaii. It is imperative that we acknowledge the unique nature of combat sports and recognize the need for a distinct commission that addresses the specific needs and challenges of these disciplines.

The proposition to merge the MMA commission with the boxing commission overlooks the fundamental differences between these sports. Just as jiu-jitsu differs from wrestling, MMA is not synonymous with boxing. Each sport requires specialized regulation and oversight to ensure the safety and well-being of its athletes.

Hawaii desperately requires a dedicated combat sports commission for several reasons:

1. Ensuring the safety of our athletes is paramount.
2. Regulation, monitoring, and tracking of fighters' records, wins, losses, and injuries are essential.
3. Strict adherence to protocols at every event is crucial.
4. The commission must generate its own funding transparently.
5. Recognition on a global scale as a legitimate state in the realm of combat sports is imperative.
6. Training and certification of all licensed personnel involved in events, including referees, judges, inspectors, timekeepers, and cutmen, is necessary.
7. Regulation of fees for local events to rebuild the combat sports ecosystem in Hawaii is vital.
8. Embracing the reality of combat sports will position Hawaii as a formidable force, attracting major events such as UFC, ONE FC, and BFKC to our islands.

By establishing a dedicated combat sports commission, we pave the way for a safer, more regulated, and internationally respected combat sports scene in Hawaii. Let us seize this opportunity to elevate our state's profile in the world of combat sports.

Thank you for your attention and consideration.

Mahalo and Aloha,

Coach Wally (Walt Carvalho)

LATE

SB-2170-SD-1

Submitted on: 3/13/2024 7:32:18 AM

Testimony for CPC on 3/13/2024 2:05:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Yancy Medeiros	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Honorable council members,

Mahalo nui loa for your time again. Having a separate MMA commission in Hawaii is crucial for ensuring the safety and regulation of mixed martial arts events. The physical demands and rules of MMA differ significantly from traditional boxing, requiring specialized oversight to protect the health and well-being of athletes. MMA incorporates a wide range of fighting techniques, including grappling, striking, and submissions, each with its own unique risks and safety considerations. By establishing a dedicated MMA commission, Hawaii can implement regulations and safety protocols tailored specifically to the sport, ensuring that events are conducted with the highest standards of athlete safety and fair competition. This separate commission can also address issues such as weight-cutting practices, drug testing, and medical requirements that are distinct to MMA. The presence of a dedicated MMA commission demonstrates a clear commitment to protecting the welfare of Hawaii's MMA athletes and promoting the sport's integrity, further solidifying Hawaii's position as a responsible and forward-thinking jurisdiction for combat sports.

In addition to the significance of a separate MMA commission, it's important to regulate fees and events, particularly considering the lack of activity in boxing over the past decade in Hawaii. By establishing a separate MMA commission, the state can comprehensively address the regulation of fees and events to revitalize combat sports oversight. This includes implementing fair and transparent fee structures for promoters and athletes, facilitating the organization of high-quality events, and promoting the resurgence of boxing through strategic planning and promotional efforts. The dedicated commission can collaborate with stakeholders to develop a framework that ensures the viability and success of boxing events, reigniting interest and participation in the sport while acknowledging the unique needs of MMA. This proactive approach demonstrates a commitment to sports regulation and development, fostering a thriving combat sports community in Hawaii. Overall, the establishment of a distinct MMA commission provides the opportunity to reinvigorate boxing and elevate MMA with tailored regulations, enriching the landscape of combat sports in the state. Again, Mahalo for your time.

Aloha all ways always,

Yancy Medeiros

