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NADINE Y. ANDO
DIRECTOR | KA LUNA HO'OKELE

DEAN I HAZAMA
DEPUTY DIRECTOR | KA HOPE LUNA HO'OKELE

Testimony of the Department of Commerce and Consumer Affairs

**Before the
Senate Committee on Commerce and Consumer Protection
and
Senate Committee on Energy, Economic Development, and Tourism
Tuesday, February 13, 2024
9:00 a.m.
Conference Room 229 and Videoconference
On the following measure:
S.B. 2170, RELATING TO COMBAT SPORTS**

Chair Keohokalole, Chair DeCoite and Members of the Committees:

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

The purposes of this bill are to: (1) establish a Combat Sports Commission of Hawaii to replace the existing mixed martial arts program; (2) prohibit no rules combat or similar contests; (3) establish a Combat Sports Commission Special Fund; and (4) make appropriations.

The Department appreciates the Legislature's consideration of much needed FTEs provided in this bill for the Professional and Vocational Licensing Division (Division); however, the Department opposes this measure because the creation of a

commission is unnecessary and less efficient than the current method of regulating combat sports in Hawaii. Currently, Hawaii Revised Statutes (HRS) chapter 440E establishes the Mixed Martial Arts (MMA) Program (Program) under the auspices of the Director of the Department as recommended in the Sunrise Analysis completed by the State Auditor in 2007. ([Sunrise Analysis: Mixed Martial Arts, Report No. 07-02, February 2007](#)). Regulation of mixed martial arts was done in this manner to streamline administration, increase accountability, and ensure efficiency. As a program rather than a commission, any problems or issues could be brought immediately to the Director without having to wait for a scheduled commission meeting. The ability to act rapidly is important for appropriately regulating an industry which holds frequent events with certain time sensitive deadlines. HRS chapter 440E already includes crucial appropriate safeguards.-for contestants, and prohibits “no rule” combat contests pursuant to HRS section 440E-23.

Moreover, the creation of a commission would significantly increase the cost of the licensing process and consequently, jeopardize events in Hawaii. For example, the proposed requirement that all seconds and participants must be licensed to participate in combat sports events would provide an additional financial barrier for amateurs to participate in combat sports. Most amateur participants and their coaches are not paid to participate in combat sports contest as they participate to gain the experience to become professionals. To require them to adhere to an annual license fee could push a portion of local athletes out of the sport.

This bill also removes an essential safeguard for fighter safety by no longer requiring an ambulance be present at all contests. The requirement of having an ambulance present has been vital to the Department’s commitment to protect participants. Combat sports and injuries are essentially synonymous. Therefore, having an ambulance present is important because it provides onsite physicians with the personnel, supplies and confidence to address injuries that need immediate attention. Injuries including, but not limited to, concussions, severe lacerations, and hematomas have necessitated the use of an ambulance in past events. Across six (6) events, held from 2022-2023, an ambulance was necessary to get a participant

expedited health services in 4 separate instances. Hawaii is not the only state that requires an ambulance at MMA events. Other states that require an ambulance include: (a) Nevada, which requires two (2) ambulances; (b) New York, which requires at least one (1) ambulance; (c) Texas which, requires one (1) ambulance; (d) and Oregon, which requires one (1) ambulance.

The Department also requests clarification regarding the following:

Unlike other boards or commissions, § -2, on page 4, lines 17 and 18, states that, "There is established within the department for administrative purposes only, the combat sports commission of Hawaii." This statement appears to be inconsistent with other boards and commissions statutes and/or administrative rules attached to the Division. Generally, boards and commissions attached to the Division are mentioned in Hawaii Revised Statutes section 26-9, and are attached to the Department for administrative purposes. This new § -2 appears to be an attempt at creating a hybrid or different board or commission from all other Division boards and commissions.

It is also unclear why the Director would separately have the authority to appoint deputy commissioners as provided on pages 5 and 6, in § -4 of this bill. The authority to appoint commissioners to this commission or any other board or commission should remain vested with the Governor with the advice and consent of the Senate.

The bill at page 11, subsection (5), requires the Department to essentially review records to determine acceptability, collect fees from the promoter, and then refund those fees if it is determined the documents are unacceptable. The Department does not believe that this process needs to be codified in law. As standard practice, the Division may collect certain fees upfront; however, if an application is abandoned or the process is not completed, then the Division, with certain exceptions, will refund the license fees minus the application fee.

The requirement, starting on page 16, line 5, that the commission approve all contestants, is impractical as there are often many contestant changes throughout the lead up to, and even in the days immediately prior to an event. Events would

potentially have to be canceled due to Sunshine Law¹ requirements that the commission would be subject to and potentially unable to meet. If the intent of this measure is to ensure expertise is provided in relation to mixed martial arts regulation, the Director is authorized by law to appoint an advisory committee, which could provide expertise without the administrative burden on the industry of a commission.

The bill also proposes a hybrid-funding scheme pursuant to § -34, which begins on page 33. Part (a)(1) calls for everything other than license fees to be placed in the Combat Sports Commission Special Fund and only license fees would go into the Compliance Resolution Fund. This hybrid-funding scheme may not be permissible given the requirements set forth in Hawaii Revised Statutes (HRS) section 26-9(o), which states “[t]here is created in the state treasury a special fund to be known as the compliance resolution fund to be expended by the director’s designated representatives as provided by this subsection. Notwithstanding any law to the contrary, and as provided by section 241-7, **all revenues, fees and fines, collected by the department shall be deposited into the compliance resolution fund...**” Emphasis added.

The Department would also like to note that subsection (b)(1) on page 33, is contrary to current law. Specifically, HR section 436B-5, provides the conditions of office for each board member. HRS section 436B-5(5) provides that, “[e]ach member of a board shall serve without pay. However, the actual and necessary traveling expenses incurred in connection with the performance of the member's official duties shall be paid by the department, upon the presentation of vouchers approved by the department.”

The Department requests clarification on the necessity of a change in the regulation of combat sports. To increase regulation at a time which events are seemingly being held less often will only increase costs for licensees. Additionally, the

¹ Hawaii Revised Statutes section 92-7, requires, among other things, that: (b) No less than six calendar days prior to the meeting, the board shall post the notice on an electronic calendar on a website maintained by the State or the appropriate county and post a notice in the board's office for public inspection...(c) If the written public notice is electronically posted on an electronic calendar less than six calendar days before the meeting, the meeting shall be canceled as a matter of law and shall not be held. The chairperson or the director shall ensure that a notice canceling the meeting is posted at the place of the meeting.

Department met with stakeholders to address any concerns related to the need to increase safety, the possibility of further clarifying procedures, and how to reduce costs on licenses. A draft of administrative rules was presented to further clarify regulation in Hawaii and address some of those concerns. No amendments were proposed by the stakeholders.

Based on the aforementioned reasons, the Department respectfully requests this measure be held in Committee. However, if the Committee is inclined to move forward with the creation of a commission as proposed in this bill, the Department must emphasize the huge undertaking the creation of a commission would require, and requests, at a minimum, a delayed implementation of at least two (2) years to ensure that:

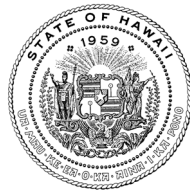
- (a) In line with the request above, the Division would need the appropriate time to establish, recruit, and hire the full-time position employees to facilitate such a commission.
- (b) The appropriate updates are made to the Division's database;
- (c) The Governor has the appropriate time to appoint members to the Commission;
and
- (d) There is no disruption in planned events.

Alternatively, the Committee may consider combining the regulation of mixed martial arts and boxing under a single commission titled the Combat Sports Commission of Hawaii. The regulatory framework could be provided to: (1) rename the existing Boxing Commission of Hawaii to the Combat Sports Commission of Hawaii; (2) increase the Boxing Commission's jurisdiction to include combat sports; (3) repeal existing law that governs mixed martial arts contests in Hawaii; (4) combine the two chapters accordingly; and (5) expand the current Commission membership to eight (8) members who could provide the necessary expertise to regulate all aspects of combat sports and combat sports events. This expansion would ease administration costs on the Department and provide flexibility to the commission to address all combat sports. It is essential that the commission is provided the ability to regulate boxing and mixed martial arts as well as events such as PowerSlap and bare-knuckle combat, which are

rising in prominence. It should be noted that California, New York, Nevada, Arizona, Connecticut, District of Columbia, Florida, Georgia, Idaho, Illinois, Kansas, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Minnesota, Mississippi, Nebraska, New Jersey, New Mexico, North Dakota, Ohio, Oklahoma, Oregon, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, South Dakota, Washington, Virginia, West Virginia, and Wyoming operate under a single combat sports commission.²

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this bill.

² States that operate under a single combat sports commission can be found at <https://www.abcboxing.com/contacts/>.



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EMPLOYEES' RETIREMENT SYSTEM
HAWAII EMPLOYER-UNION HEALTH BENEFITS TRUST FUND
OFFICE OF THE PUBLIC DEFENDER

ADMINISTRATIVE AND RESEARCH OFFICE
BUDGET, PROGRAM PLANNING AND MANAGEMENT DIVISION
FINANCIAL ADMINISTRATION DIVISION
OFFICE OF FEDERAL AWARDS MANAGEMENT

WRITTEN ONLY

TESTIMONY BY LUIS P. SALAVERIA
DIRECTOR, DEPARTMENT OF BUDGET AND FINANCE
TO THE SENATE COMMITTEES ON COMMERCE AND CONSUMER PROTECTION
AND ENERGY, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, AND TOURISM
ON
SENATE BILL NO. 2170

February 13, 2024
9:00 a.m.
Room 229 and Videoconference

RELATING TO COMBAT SPORTS

The Department of Budget and Finance (B&F) offers comments on this bill.

Senate Bill (S.B.) No. 2170 adds a new Chapter to HRS entitled "Combat Sports Contests" (CSC) to: 1) establish the Combat Sports Commission of Hawai'i (CSCH), administratively attached to the Department of Commerce and Consumer Affairs (DCCA), to regulate CSC events and license/certify promoters and other CSC-related professionals; 2) authorize the Director of DCCA to appoint an Executive Officer and Deputy Commissioners and hire other staff for CSCH; 3) grant CSCH various powers including approving proposed CSC events, assigning investigators, judges, and other official representatives to each CSC, promulgating administrative rules, and issuing licensing fees, fines, and penalties; 4) establish a Combat Sports Commission Special Fund (CSCSF) to fund the CSCH; 5) update Sections 26-9 and 92-28, HRS, to include references to CSCH; 6) repeal Chapter 440E, HRS (Mixed Martial Arts Contests); 7) appropriate an unspecified amount of general funds for FY 25 to fund an unspecified

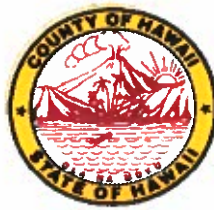
number of full-time equivalent positions for CSCH; and 8) appropriate an unspecified amount of special fund ceiling for FY 25 for CSCSF.

As a matter of general policy, B&F does not support the creation of any special fund which does not meet the requirements of Section 37-52.3, HRS. Special funds should:

1) serve a need as demonstrated by the purpose, scope of work and an explanation why the program cannot be implemented successfully under the general fund appropriation process; 2) reflect a clear nexus between the benefits sought and charges made upon the users or beneficiaries or a clear link between the program and the sources of revenue; 3) provide an appropriate means of financing for the program or activity; and 4) demonstrate the capacity to be financially self-sustaining. Regarding S.B. No. 2170, it is difficult to determine whether the proposed CSCSF would be self-sustaining.

As currently written, CSCSF would have a starting balance of \$0 for FY 25 and the positions would be general-funded instead of special-funded, which would go against the established purpose of CSCSF to “compensate the commissioners and inspectors” and fund “administrative costs of the commission” as stated on Pages 33 and 34. Finally, B&F defers to DCCA regarding the programmatic merits of this bill.

Thank you for your consideration of our comments.



Mitchell D. Roth
Mayor

Deanna S. Sako
Managing Director

Robert H. Command
Deputy Managing Director

County of Hawai'i
Office of the Mayor

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February 12, 2024

Committee on Commerce and Community Development
Senator Jarrett Keohokalole, Chair
Senator Carol Fukunaga, Vice Chair

Committee on Energy, Economic Development and Tourism
Senator Lynn DeCoite, Chair
Senator Glenn Wakai, Vice Chair

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

Subject: S.B. 2170 RELATING TO COMBAT SPORTS
Hearing Date: Tuesday, February 13, 2024, at 9:00 a.m.
Time/Place of Hearing: Via Videoconference, Conference Room 229

Aloha Honorable Chairs Keohokalole and DeCoite, Honorable Vice Chairs, Fukunaga and Wakai, and members of the Committee on Commerce and Community Development and the Committee on Energy, Economic Development and Tourism,

On behalf of the County of Hawai'i, I express my support for S.B. 2170. 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. Please feel free to contact me with any questions.

Sincerely,

Mitchell D. Roth
Mayor / County of Hawai'i

SB-2170

Submitted on: 2/9/2024 11:07:06 AM

Testimony for CPN on 2/13/2024 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Walter Carvalho	Individual	Support	In Person

Comments:

Aloha Chair Keohokalole, and members of the Committee

Hawai'i needs a real combat sports commission with dedicated funding to attract the Elite Combat Sport events to be hosted here in Hawai'i. I support the measures intent to create a combat sports commission for the purposes of making this safer for all the Athletes involved and to help in attracting the UFC, ONE FC, and several other professional events to Hawai'i. Way to many opportunities for Hawai'i fighters have passed us by, kids moving away to get on the Big shows and leaving Hawai'i. I think we all know what needs to happen to make things work for Hawai'i Combat sports.

Thank you and Aloha

Coach Wally. Walt Carvalho

SB-2170

Submitted on: 2/12/2024 8:12:26 AM

Testimony for CPN on 2/13/2024 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Marcus Gambo	Individual	Support	Remotely Via Zoom

Comments:

Subject: Urgent Support Needed for Bill SB2170 to Revitalize Combat Sports in Hawaii

Dear Chair, Representatives, and Committee Members,

I reach out to you today as an advocate and strong supporter for Bill SB2170, which seeks the establishment of a commission for combat sports in Hawaii. This bill represents a beacon of hope for the combat sports community, which has been significantly impacted by the cumulative effects of increased fees and restrictive regulations. My personal journey in the combat sports arena since arriving in Hawaii in 2014 has given me a front-row seat to the challenges and diminishing opportunities faced by fighters and promoters alike.

In 2017, I was fortunate enough to compete in eight fights, a testament to the then-thriving local fight scene that offered monthly events. This vibrancy facilitated not only career opportunities for athletes but also fostered a unique cultural and community exchange, particularly between the military and local populations. Unfortunately, by 2019, the number of fight shows had sharply declined, occurring bi-monthly due to the financial and regulatory hurdles that promoters faced. In the aftermath of the pandemic, the situation has worsened, with a mere handful of events taking place over the last four years.

This decline has had profound implications. For fighters like myself, the scarcity of local promotions offering decent compensation has compelled us to seek opportunities on the mainland. This necessitates thousands of dollars in expenses for travel and training camps—costs that mainland promoters are often unwilling to cover. This not only imposes significant financial strain on Hawaii's fighters but also effectively bars many from pursuing a professional career in combat sports. It extinguishes the dreams of aspiring fighters and dims the beacon of hope and possibility that success in this arena can represent.

The commission proposed by Bill SB2170 is pivotal. It aims to alleviate the financial and regulatory pressures that have stifled the growth of combat sports in Hawaii. By doing so, it promises to revive an essential cultural tradition and re-open doors for community engagement, professional development, and international recognition for our athletes. Combat sports are more than a discipline—they are a platform for personal growth, cultural exchange, and the fostering of community ties, including those between the military and local residents.

Moreover, the presence of combat sports offers a constructive outlet for our youth, channeling their energy towards discipline, perseverance, and the management of anger and aggression. The mentorship and training opportunities that once flourished, allowing local up-and-comers to learn from legends like BJ Penn, Max Holloway, Yancy Medeiros, Brad Tavares, and Maki Pitolo are in jeopardy. We risk losing a vital part of our cultural fabric and a critical pathway for aspiring athletes.

In light of these challenges, I urge you to support Bill SB2170. This legislation is not merely about reducing bureaucratic barriers; it's about preserving a cherished tradition, nurturing talent, and ensuring that Hawaii remains a vibrant hub for combat sports. It's about providing our athletes with viable career paths and inspiring the next generation to dream big and achieve greatness in the ring.

Thank you for considering the critical importance of this bill and the profound impact it will have on the future of combat sports in Hawaii. Your support can help restore the vitality of this industry, enabling our fighters to pursue their passions on home soil and to continue bringing glory and hope to our communities.

Very Respectfully,

Marcus D. Gamble

SB-2170

Submitted on: 2/12/2024 7:28:12 AM

Testimony for CPN on 2/13/2024 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jon Barnard	Individual	Support	Remotely Via Zoom

Comments:

Aloha Chair, Representatives, and other members of the Committee.

I appreciate your leadership and due diligence in serving the people of Hawaii. I am honored to spend this time with you on this matter. Thank you for taking the time to hear my testimony on why I am in support of bill SB2170.

As a native Hawaiian, who was born on the island of Oahu and raised on the west side of Makaha. In the 9th grade, struggling with dyslexia I remember being told by a teacher that I wouldn't amount to anything more than a labor worker. Discouraged like never before. Subject to my circumstances and surroundings and not possessing a knack for most sports. Combat sports at the time was my only way out. I saw combat sports as a way to lose weight, and gain confidence, and quite frankly this was the only thing I was halfway decent at.

Six months into training Martial Arts I found myself across the ring of an opponent with an undefeated record of more the 10 matches. As my first fight, I was sure to lose with those odds. Locking eyes with my opponent across the ring thinking "Why did I sign up for this?" I was about to face the toughest challenge of my life. All that was running to my head was how am I going to overcome this. Remembering what my coach spoke to me earlier ensured me, "I can do anything that I put my mind to". Against all odd and external doubt. My life changed that very day.

Not knowing the additional benefits of combat sports, my first fight transforms my life. Teaching me how to overcome ambiguity, lead me to meet extraordinary people, and learn new soft skills. Ultimately, changing the trajectory of my life. Former science and technology educator in Kapolei and current IT developer for a few Corporate 500 companies in the past 5 years. I share my credentials to affirm the contributions mixed martial arts had on my professional career. Awarding me the discipline to focus; the ability to cultivate my future; and the grit to be resilient within ambiguity. My commitment to combat sports led me to secure a bachelor's degree in Business Management even after I counted out furthering my education. I knew if I could get through a competition, I could accomplish anything. My first fight was the moment I knew I gained the desired skills to become a champion. While acquiring soft skills that deem me a competitive candidate in the IT industry. With that, I want to thank the Hawaii combat scene for bestowing on me additional character traits that led me to become a proud contributing member of society.

Over 10 Years, I was able to compile a winning record with over 50+ fights in Hawaii alone. Secured five titles in multiple weight classes. Featured on TV shows, commercials, podcasts, newspapers, and magazines. Trained with a bunch of UFC champions, traveled the world, and changed the lives of so many kids all through the benefits of mixed martial Arts. If you met me when I was an adolescent. like my 9th-grade teacher you too would have had a similar forecast of my adult life. But fighting changed that for the better.

Today I volunteer and lead a combat team of 15+ young men and women in a town that used to be known as one of the most rough neighborhoods in Charlotte North Carolina. These are some of the troubled kids that society has given up on. The young who couldn't see a future for themselves. While being coached, members are mentored to take alternative paths in life using characteristics found in combat sports. Countless testimonies of positive feedback with life-altering changes are felt throughout their community and expressed to our gym. This was done by giving them competition to look forward to. Indirectly emphasized in combat sports are self-control and concentration. Students also learn to focus on individual growth; learn to work towards specific goals; and operate within structure, rules, boundaries, and respect. These are priceless values that benefit all surrounding municipalities.

Since the involvement of the DCCA in the later years competing in Hawaii I've witnessed the erosion of mixed martial arts and its communities. Have you ever wondered if there was a correlation between the rise of deadly violent crimes and the lack of avenues for individuals to control their aggression/emotions? Mixed martial arts is one of the best developers of self-discipline, and self-control. If we can give kids and adults a safe place to channel their aggression. I am sure we would see a downtick in violence in our communities.

I have spent the past 4 years analyzing and conversing with other regulating bodies in other states on how they are handling and regulating combat sports. In conclusion, there is a much greater benefit to creating a self-governing body detached from local government. I am not sure why the DCCA decided to intervene and regulate an industry that was doing just fine. Would you say the initiatives set out by the DCCA have been met? If so was there a hidden initiative to kill all combat sports from existing? Because that is what happened. When the DCCA was NOT involved there were events every weekend giving the community something to look forward to and to work toward. Since the DCCA, we went from 100's of events a year to 2-5 events a year. Diminishing the garage gyms that kept kids off the streets, and potential coaches from the nightlife. It gave so many people a purpose outside of their mundane lives.

DCCA heard several testimonies from promoters. DCCA knows the numbers exposing the truth of how much a promotion can make for each event in Hawaii. Thus proving that most local promoters truly love the arts and have no intention of trying to get rich from it. Hawaii is already expensive to do anything as is. The DCCA has disincentivized promoters from holding events in Hawaii through added DCCA event ticketing fees, licensing fees, and all other miscellaneous DCCA required costs. How are these sanctioning fees helping this industry again? it is not. It is hurting future generations and excluding a large portion of the island's youth from being a part of an extracurricular activity that aligns with their Polynesian warrior spirit.

I urged the DCCA to take a step back, support, and allow the people who have had their boots on the ground of combat sports to take a stab at creating a self-sustaining commissioning body that will be designed and formed by the MMA community who truly care about the sport and its competing athletes. This will be our last chance to bring back the glory days of mixed martial arts. The last chance to discourage gun violence is through mixed martial arts. And the last chance to make a difference in the lives of youth who are excluded from other extracurricular activities and want to call MMA their sport.

The Warrior spirit is in every native of Hawaii. I truly believe that this will lead to communal change that our society will enjoy for years to come. I have my boots on the ground in the MMA industry and I will support this initiative hands-on with my learned corporate skills, resources, and vast network.

With Aloha,

Jon Barnard

SB-2170

Submitted on: 2/9/2024 11:46:40 AM

Testimony for CPN on 2/13/2024 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Falaniko Vitale	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha, My name Falaniko Vitale and I'm in STRONG support of Bill SB2170.

The importance of having a commission were created to protect the health, safety, and welfare of all Athletes through licensing and regulation of the sport. Commissions were also created to regulate the sport to insure fair and impartial judgment is used when assigning officials to work events and when disciplining licensees for violations of the law.

As a former Professional MMA Fighter/ Combat Sports Athlete, a current Judge and Referee in Big and small shows, I've witness many incidents in Combat Sports and MMA Fights were participating Athletes competing in a missed match fights, Referees not knowing what they're doing during the course of competition, Athletes making excruciating weight cuts that almost hurt or killed them, promoters taking advantage of fighters, fighters not getting paid by promoters, Amateurs fighters getting paid, and Former paid Athletes going back to Amateur status. These are due to the fact that there is no one regulating the rules being implemented.

The need of a committee is over due and a must to protect not only the Athletes, but to the future of all Combat Sports Business in general!

Mahalo

SB-2170

Submitted on: 2/10/2024 9:43:09 AM

Testimony for CPN on 2/13/2024 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
David Padilla	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha,

my name is David Padilla and I am in support of SB2170. I believe that having a Combat Sports Commission is what the state needs to help excel the states recognition on a world stage. Hawaii was once the hotbed for Mixed Martial Arts. That slipped away as other states and countries started to stand up Mixed Martial Arts commissions. I'd like to see our state get back to where we were, and having a commission would be the first step in the right direction. Mahalo for your time.

SB-2170

Submitted on: 2/10/2024 4:05:02 PM

Testimony for CPN on 2/13/2024 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
jerry Leslie Chang	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Chairs Keohoklolo and Lee and Vice Chairs Fukunaga and Inouye and members of the committees

I support SB 2170.

my name is Jerry I. Chang, a former member of the Hoiuse of Representatives representing the Hilo District.

I introduced the initial legislation that created Chapter 440E to regulate Mixed Martial Arts contests in the State because as the former President of the Big island Boxing Assn. before MMA came into being, we were strictly regulated by the State Boximng Commissison.

When MMA events started in Hawai'i without any regulatory oversight it endangered the athletes and shortchanged the paid spectators with false advertising etc.

This bill has been worked on over the interim with DCCA, Chair Keohokalole and members of the MMA community to come up with a complete bill that addresses the health and safety of the athletes, provide the much needed oversight and addresses all of the issues that would attract the big events to attract worldwide attention through visiting fans and television exposure.

A recommended amendment to include language that part of the deposits in the combat sports commission special funds be dedicated to benefit the participants to ensure their health and safety.

Mahalo for the opportunity to submit this testimony.
Jerry I. Chang

808 286-0461

SB-2170

Submitted on: 2/10/2024 10:11:44 PM

Testimony for CPN on 2/13/2024 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Jon Barnard	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha Chair, Representatives, and other members of the Committee.

I appreciate your leadership and due diligence in serving the people of Hawaii. I am honored to spend this time with you on this matter. Thank you for taking the time to hear my testimony on why I am in support of bill SB2170.

As a native Hawaiian, who was born on the island of Oahu and raised on the west side of Makaha. In the 9th grade, struggling with dyslexia I remember being told by a teacher that I wouldn't amount to anything more than a labor worker. Discouraged like never before. Subject to my circumstances and surroundings and not possessing a knack for most sports. Combat sports at the time was my only way out. I saw combat sports as a way to lose weight, and gain confidence, and quite frankly this was the only thing I was halfway decent at.

Six months into training Martial Arts I found myself across the ring of an opponent with an undefeated record of more the 10 matches. As my first fight, I was sure to lose with those odds. Locking eyes with my opponent across the ring thinking "Why did I sign up for this?" I was about to face the toughest challenge of my life. All that was running to my head was how am I going to overcome this. Remembering what my coach spoke to me earlier ensured me, "I can do anything that I put my mind to". Against all odd and external doubt. My life changed that very day.

Not knowing the additional benefits of combat sports, my first fight transforms my life. Teaching me how to overcome ambiguity, lead me to meet extraordinary people, and learn new soft skills. Ultimately, changing the trajectory of my life. Former science and technology educator in Kapolei and current IT developer for a few Corporate 500 companies in the past 5 years. I share my credentials to affirm the contributions mixed martial arts had on my professional career. Awarding me the discipline to focus; the ability to cultivate my future; and the grit to be resilient within ambiguity. My commitment to combat sports led me to secure a bachelor's degree in Business Management even after I counted out furthering my education. I knew if I could get through a competition, I could accomplish anything. My first fight was the moment I knew I gained the desired skills to become a champion. While acquiring soft skills that deem me a competitive candidate in the IT industry. With that, I want to thank the Hawaii combat scene for bestowing on me additional character traits that led me to become a proud contributing member of society.

Over 10 Years, I was able to compile a winning record with over 50+ fights in Hawaii alone. Secured five titles in multiple weight classes. Featured on TV shows, commercials, podcasts, newspapers, and magazines. Trained with a bunch of UFC champions, traveled the world, and changed the lives of so many kids all through the benefits of mixed martial Arts. If you met me when I was an adolescent. like my 9th-grade teacher you too would have had a similar forecast of my adult life. But fighting changed that for the better.

Today I volunteer and lead a combat team of 15+ young men and women in a town that used to be known as one of the most rough neighborhoods in Charlotte North Carolina. These are some of the troubled kids that society has given up on. The young who couldn't see a future for themselves. While being coached, members are mentored to take alternative paths in life using characteristics found in combat sports. Countless testimonies of positive feedback with life-altering changes are felt throughout their community and expressed to our gym. This was done by giving them competition to look forward to. Indirectly emphasized in combat sports are self-control and concentration. Students also learn to focus on individual growth; learn to work towards specific goals; and operate within structure, rules, boundaries, and respect. These are priceless values that benefit all surrounding municipalities.

Since the involvement of the DCCA in the later years competing in Hawaii I've witnessed the erosion of mixed martial arts and its communities. Have you ever wondered if there was a correlation between the rise of deadly violent crimes and the lack of avenues for individuals to control their aggression/emotions? Mixed martial arts is one of the best developers of self-discipline, and self-control. If we can give kids and adults a safe place to channel their aggression. I am sure we would see a downtick in violence in our communities.

I have spent the past 4 years analyzing and conversing with other regulating bodies in other states on how they are handling and regulating combat sports. In conclusion, there is a much greater benefit to creating a self-governing body detached from local government. I am not sure why the DCCA decided to intervene and regulate an industry that was doing just fine. Would you say the initiatives set out by the DCCA have been met? If so was there a hidden initiative to kill all combat sports from existing? Because that is what happened. When the DCCA was NOT involved there were events every weekend giving the community something to look forward to and to work toward. Since the DCCA, we went from 100's of events a year to 2-5 events a year. Diminishing the garage gyms that kept kids off the streets, and potential coaches from the nightlife. It gave so many people a purpose outside of their mundane lives.

DCCA heard several testimonies from promoters. DCCA knows the numbers exposing the truth of how much a promotion can make for each event in Hawaii. Thus proving that most local promoters truly love the arts and have no intention of trying to get rich from it. Hawaii is already expensive to do anything as is. The DCCA has disincentivized promoters from holding events in Hawaii through added DCCA event ticketing fees, licensing fees, and all other miscellaneous DCCA required costs. How are these sanctioning fees helping this industry again? it is not. It is hurting future generations and excluding a large portion

of the island's youth from being a part of an extracurricular activity that aligns with their Polynesian warrior spirit.

I urged the DCCA to take a step back, support, and allow the people who have had their boots on the ground of combat sports to take a stab at creating a self-sustaining commissioning body that will be designed and formed by the MMA community who truly care about the sport and its competing athletes. This will be our last chance to bring back the glory days of mixed martial arts. The last chance to discourage gun violence is through mixed martial arts. And the last chance to make a difference in the lives of youth who are excluded from other extracurricular activities and want to call MMA their sport.

The Warrior spirit is in every native of Hawaii. I truly believe that this will lead to communal change that our society will enjoy for years to come. I have my boots on the ground in the MMA industry and I will support this initiative hands-on with my learned corporate skills, resources, and vast network

SB-2170

Submitted on: 2/11/2024 11:42:05 AM

Testimony for CPN on 2/13/2024 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Regina Gregory	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Do not spend public money on violent sports.

SB-2170

Submitted on: 2/12/2024 7:51:33 AM

Testimony for CPN on 2/13/2024 9:00:00 AM

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

Comments:

Aloha,

Mahalo for your time. Having a Boxing Athletic Commission plays a crucial role in shaping the future of full contact sports in Hawai'i.

As a professional MMA fighter and representative of Hawai'i, i know it will ensure the safety and integrity of our promotions/events and the well-being of the athletes.

Making a commission contributes to a professional and competitive environment in Hawai'i. It provides oversight, licensing, and regulation for athletes and participants to keep competing in a professional, structured, and most importantly SAFE environment...

Additionally, the commission's involvement promotes the development of local talent, encourages sportsmanship, and creates opportunities for our athletes to showcase their skills and be ready to compete when on bigger platform(s)...

It also contributes to the economic and cultural significance of full contact sports in Hawai'i, drawing attention to the sport and its impact on the local community.

Through its dedication to upholding standards and supporting the growth of boxing, kickboxing, and MMA, the Hawai'i Boxing Athletic Commission is instrumental in shaping a bright future for the sport in the state.

I truly believe "WE" can make a difference and build a commission that not just has Hawai'i values, but instills Hawaiian values.

We have the upbringing, knowledge, experience, but most of all the ALOHA to create fairness for the future of our Athletes.

Pls give us the opportunity to build a foundation for their future, and to better represent full contact sports in Hawai'i.

Mahalo Nui loa,
Yancy Medeiros

SB-2170

Submitted on: 2/12/2024 8:11:40 AM

Testimony for CPN on 2/13/2024 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Noa	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Dear Committee Members,

I'm writing to express my enthusiastic support for Senate Bill 2170, which establishes the Combat Sports Commission of Hawai'i to regulate combat sports. Im a passionate advocate for athlete safety and fair competition, I am someone who plays alot of combat sports so I really believe that this bill is a big step forward in ensuring the well-being of participants and maintaining the integrity of the sport. I've been playing these sports for a while and I know that Combat sports, while thrilling, also pose a lot of risks to athletes like me if not properly regulated. By creating the Combat Sports Commission, we can implement rules and safety protocols that prioritize the health and safety of competitors, it will reduce the potential for serious injuries and will create a culture of respect and sportsmanship.

Additionally , the establishment of the Combat Sports Commission Special Fund will ensure that the Commission has the necessary resources to effectively carry out its regulatory duties. In conclusion, I urge you to support Senate Bill 2170 and the establishment of the Combat Sports Commission of Hawai'i, as it demonstrates a commitment to promoting responsible and well-regulated combat sports competition while making sure the people involved are safe.

Thank you for considering my testimony in support of bill sb 2170.

Sincerely,
[Noa]

LATE

February 13, 2024

Bill SB-2170

**[IN SUPPORT]
[ON BEHALF OF NOKANET]**

Aloha Chair, Senators, and Committee Members,

My name is Martin Han, and I am here today to voice my support for Bill SB-2170. We believe this bill will address areas that the previous legislation lacked. With the evolution and broader reach of combat sports, this bill is crucial in safeguarding the individuals participating and investing in nurturing local talent here in Hawaii.

We owe it to our future talent to provide proper guidance and management. The only way we can achieve this is by having individuals with global experience and foresight directing this commission.

Mahalo for your attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,



Martin Han

Martin Han
Martin@nokanet.com

LATE

LATE

SB-2170

Submitted on: 2/14/2024 9:09:19 AM

Testimony for CPN on 2/13/2024 9:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Ryan Willis	Individual	Oppose	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

I Oppose.

Government getting involved in things it shouldn't.

Just another commission to waste time and money