



**TESTIMONY OF
THE DEPARTMENT OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL
KA 'OIHANA O KA LOIO KUHINA
THIRTY-THIRD LEGISLATURE, 2025**

ON THE FOLLOWING MEASURE:

S.B. NO. 148, S.D. 2, H.D. 1, RELATING TO COMBAT SPORTS.

BEFORE THE:

HOUSE COMMITTEES ON CONSUMER PROTECTION & COMMERCE AND ON
JUDICIARY & HAWAIIAN AFFAIRS

DATE: Tuesday, March 18, 2025

TIME: 2:00 p.m.

LOCATION: State Capitol, Room 329

TESTIFIER(S): Anne E. Lopez, Attorney General, or
Andrew I. Kim or Christopher J.I. Leong, Deputy Attorneys General

Chairs Matayoshi and Tarnas and Members of the Committees:

The Department of the Attorney General provides the following comments.

This bill (1) renames the Boxing Commission of Hawaii as the Combat Sports Commission of Hawaii; (2) amends the jurisdiction of the Commission to include combat sports contests; (3) prohibits no rules combat or similar contests; and (4) repeals chapter 440E, Hawaii Revised Statutes (HRS), relating to Mixed Martial Arts Contests.

The Department has concerns regarding section 17 on page 43, lines 1-5, of the bill, which provides: "This Act shall take effect on July 1, 3000; provided that:

(1) Sections 1 and 2 shall take effect on April 1, 2026; and (2) Section 14 shall take effect on July 1, 2025." Providing a different effective date for section 2, which sets forth provisions on combat sports contests, may lead to unintended consequences.

Section 2 of the bill works in relation to several other sections of the bill, including section 3, which places the combat sports commission within the Department of Commerce and Consumer Affairs; section 6 of the bill, which establishes the combat sports commission; and section 13, which repeals chapter 440E, HRS, relating to mixed martial arts contests.

Accordingly, we recommend amending the above wording (page 43, lines 1-5) as follows: "This Act, upon its approval, shall take effect on July 1, [~~3000;~~ 2026; provided that[: (1) Sections 1 and 2 shall take effect on April 1, 2026; and (2) Section] section 14

shall take effect on July 1, 2025." To allow for time for the Department of Commerce and Consumer Affairs to prepare for the creation of this commission, a delayed implementation of the Act is advisable.

Thank you for the opportunity to offer comments.



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Testimony of the Department of Commerce and Consumer Affairs

**Before the
House Committee on Consumer Protection and Commerce
And
House Committee on Judiciary and Hawaiian Affairs
Tuesday, March 18, 2025
2:00 p.m.
Conference Room 415 and Videoconference**

**On the following measure:
S.B. 148, S.D. 2, H.D. 1, RELATING TO COMBAT SPORTS**

Chair Matayoshi, Chair Tarnas, and members of the Committees:

My name is Nadine Ando, and I am the Director of the Department of Commerce and Consumer Affairs. The Department supports the intent of this bill, which establishes a Combat Sports Commission (Commission), and offers comments.

The purposes of this bill are to: (1) rename the Boxing Commission of Hawaii as the Combat Sports Commission of Hawaii; (2) amend the jurisdiction of the Commission to include combat sports contests; (3) prohibit no rules combat or similar combat sports contests; and (4) repeal chapter 440E, HRS, relating to Mixed Martial Arts Contests.

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 licensees

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. The requirement for an ambulance to be present during all events be returned to the statute as it provides support necessary the attending healthcare professionals. The presence of an ambulance also allows for a more expedited response to critical injuries that occur during a combat sports contest. States such as California, Texas, New Jersey, New York, Massachusetts, Florida, Kansas, Oregon, and Nevada all require the presence of an ambulance at combat sports events.
2. Regarding section 440-R on page 24 line 1 to 21, and page 25, line 1 to 4, the Department asks that the section be amended to the original form of the bill. While the Department acknowledges that licensed health care professionals may assist an attending physician, the Department feels it is essential that at least two (2) licensed physicians are in attendance to evaluate each contestant during and immediately after all contests regardless of the size. To exempt "small combat sports contests" from having a physicians present, places participants in an unsafe position to compete in combat sports.
3. Page 38, lines 20 to 21, and page 39, lines 1 to 5, 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 the Commission be a public member.
4. 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.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this bill.

Honorable Members of the Legislative Assembly,

My name is Walt Carvalho and I am writing to express my support for the bill with amendment's to create a Mixed Martial Arts Commission in our state. As a very passionate Coach, Mentor, Promoter and a pioneer of the MMA scene here in Hawaii for more than 31 years. I believe that establishing a commission is essential for the growth, safety, and legitimacy of mixed martial arts in our community.

Right now we have a Boxing commission that hasn't produced anything in 18 years and a failing MMA Program that went from 144 events a year to zero in 13 years. How can you take 2 FAILING Programs and make a successful one with all the same people involved??? One commission 2 divisions is the answer each producing their own success. DCCA ONLY INVOLVED IN LICENSING ALL ATHLETES, PROMOTERS AND OFFICIALS ECT.

Getting the Amateur events back is the key to combat sports here in Hawaii these are the kids that will someday be the next big thing representing the state of Hawaii.

Reflecting on the landscape of MMA in Hawaii over the past decade, it is evident that our state once stood as a beacon of excellence in the sport. In 2011, Hawaii proudly boasted 14 athletes on the UFC roster, a remarkable accomplishment that placed us at the forefront of global MMA representation on a per capita basis. This achievement not only showcased the talent and dedication of our local fighters but also inspired countless young athletes to pursue their dreams of competing on the world stage.

During this golden era of MMA in Hawaii, our community thrived with thousands of youth athletes actively training and aspiring to follow in the footsteps of their UFC heroes. The proliferation of successful MMA events statewide provided opportunities for these aspiring fighters to showcase their skills and pursue their passion for the sport. These events not only entertained audiences but also served as platforms for talent development and community engagement.

However, as we fast forward to the present day, it pains me to acknowledge the stark contrast in the current state of MMA in Hawaii. Where once there were dozens of thriving events, we now find ourselves with less than a handful of sanctioned competitions. Even more concerning are the reports of underground and smoker events, which indicate a dangerous trend towards unregulated and potentially unsafe practices within our MMA community.

The decline of organized MMA events in Hawaii underscores the urgent need for legislative action to establish a Mixed Martial Arts Commission. Such a commission would play a pivotal role in revitalizing and safeguarding the sport in our state. By implementing regulations, licensing requirements, and safety standards, the commission would ensure the well-being of athletes, uphold the integrity of competitions, and protect the interests of fans and stakeholders alike.

Moreover, the establishment of a commission presents an opportunity to reinvigorate our local MMA scene, fostering a supportive environment for athletes, promoters, and fans to thrive. By providing guidance, oversight, and support to the MMA community, we can reignite the passion and excitement that once defined our state's involvement in the sport.

In conclusion, I implore you to support the creation of a Mixed Martial Arts Commission in Hawaii. Let us come together to honor our rich fighting heritage, empower our aspiring athletes, and ensure a vibrant future for MMA in our beloved state.

1. Combat sport commission to be separate from the Boxing commission
2. If the commissions have to be combined then we should have 2 separate divisions within the commission one for boxing and one for Mixed Martial arts each accounting and producing for themselves, all revenues ect.
3. DCCA only involved for licensing the Athletes.
4. If the DCCA is involved they should pick up some of the cost for the events IE. Judges/ Time Keeper/ Cutman/ Referees / Inspectors / Doctors. ECT.
5. All Coaches, Referees, Judges, Doctors, Time Keepers, Cutmen, Inspectors and any other event personnel have to go through training classes to make sure they are qualified to do their job. Certification like every other state and country around the World.
6. Dcca should only collect fees for licensing athletes the other fees charged should go into an appropriated fund for the each branch of this commission.

Boxing and MMA should not be combined under the new Combat sports commission. One commission 2 divisions 1. Boxing 2. MMA. Las Vegas has one Athletic Commission with 2 divisions we should follow that protocol.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Coach: Wally Carvalho

SB-148-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/16/2025 2:03:03 PM

Testimony for CPC on 3/18/2025 2:00:00 PM

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

Comments:

Aloha everyone,

My name is David Padilla, and I am writing to express my strong support for the proposed bill. I firmly believe that establishing a commission is essential for the growth, safety, and legitimacy of mixed martial arts in our community.

A general blueprint for a combat sports commission has already been established in other states, such as Nevada. They have successfully managed to come under one commission while maintaining the integrity of the rules for each sport. This approach has allowed MMA and boxing to remain separate branches within the same commission, and that would be key.

Furthermore, the establishment of a combat sports commission presents an opportunity to revitalize our local MMA scene. By providing guidance, oversight, and support to the MMA community, the commission can foster a supportive environment for athletes, promoters, and fans to thrive.

Mahalo for your time and consideration.

Honorable Members of the Legislative Assembly,

My name is Martin Day. I am a UFC veteran, multiple time mixed martial arts and kickboxing champion of Hawaii, owner of Prime Martial Arts, and MMA/Kickboxing/TaeKwonDo coach. I am writing to express my strong support for the bill, with amendments, to establish a Mixed Martial Arts Commission in our state. As someone who has dedicated 23 years to the martial arts community in Hawaii—as a student, athlete, coach, and mentor—I have seen firsthand the profound impact that kickboxing and mixed martial arts can have on individuals and communities.

Competing in both Kickboxing and MMA has shaped me into the person I am today as a businessman, coach, martial arts instructor, and father. These sports instill discipline, perseverance, and confidence, values that extend far beyond the ring and into everyday life. Over the years, I have watched countless kids and adults alike transform through their training, developing not only physical skills but also the mental strength and resilience that help them succeed in all aspects of life.

Hawaii once stood as a powerhouse in the MMA world. In 2011, our state proudly had 14 athletes on the UFC roster—an incredible achievement that showcased the level of talent and dedication within our local fight community. This success inspired thousands of young athletes, including myself, fueling a thriving scene where MMA events flourished and provided opportunities for competitors to chase their dreams.

Unfortunately, the landscape of MMA in Hawaii has drastically changed. The number of sanctioned events has dwindled, leaving fewer opportunities for athletes to develop their skills and compete in a safe, regulated environment. Even more concerning is the rise of underground and unsanctioned events which pose serious safety risks for fighters and undermine the integrity of the sport as a whole.

This decline underscores the urgent need for a Mixed Martial Arts Commission. A governing body would help reestablish structure, enforce safety regulations, and ensure that athletes have a legitimate path to success. By creating a commission, we not only protect fighters but also revitalize a sport that has given so much to our community. We have a chance to reignite Hawaii's rich Mixed Martial Arts legacy, providing athletes, promoters, and fans with the support needed to grow the sport in a safe and professional manner.

Another crucial aspect of this bill is the need to separate the regulation of Kickboxing and MMA from the existing Boxing Commission. While boxing, kickboxing, and MMA share similarities, they are distinct sports with different rules, training methods, and safety considerations. A dedicated MMA Commission would allow for specialized oversight, ensuring that regulations are tailored to the unique needs of the sport and its athletes. This separation would help streamline event approvals, improve safety protocols, and create a more efficient system for

promoters and fighters alike, ultimately fostering growth and professionalism in the MMA and Kickboxing communities.

I urge you to recognize the importance of this bill and the positive impact it can have on our state. By taking action, we can ensure that MMA continues to change lives, just as it did for me and for so many others.

Sincerely,

Martin Day

Aloha,

My name is Wayne Perrin Jr., and I am the founder and head coach of Big Dog Fight Club. I have spent decades training, mentoring, and supporting Hawaii's fighters. Many of my students have competed at high levels, and some have gone on to represent Hawaii on the global stage. Yet, despite our deep history in combat sports, Hawaii lacks the necessary structure to support and grow this industry.

As the founder of Big Dog Fight Club, I have trained and mentored countless fighters in Hawaii. Many have gone on to compete at high levels, yet they face challenges getting recognition because our state lacks a proper regulatory body.

I was the first coach to train Max Holloway—starting in my garage and on the beaches of our hometown of Waianae. I've also had the privilege of working with Yancy Medeiros, Maki Pitolo, Tony "Da Tiger" Rodriguez, PJ Dean, and the many other "Tried and True Waianae Boys." But perhaps my greatest honor was training my own son, Wayne Perrin III.

It was never easy finding someone near 6'1", 175 lbs who was willing to "stand and bang" with my son in his prime. So, we made the transition to MMA, cross-training with Hawaii Fight Club since my son needed more ground skills. I didn't agree to the fight he took against Koa Ramos, but as his father and coach, I stood strong by his side. We accepted that defeat, and I would proudly do it again, knowing the outcome—because that's what this sport is about. Respect, perseverance, and the opportunity to grow.

But for all the lessons that combat sports taught my family, there was one fight we never saw coming, one we could not prepare for.

I lost my other son, Ethan Owens, to gun violence. He was taken from us before he had the chance to truly grow into the man he dreamed of becoming.

Ethan looked up to his older brother, Wayne III, as one of his greatest heroes. He would often tell me how much he dreamed of one day being strong enough, skilled enough, and old enough to spar with his big brother for real. He wanted to train honestly, to push himself the way Wayne did, to prove himself, not just as a fighter, but as a man.

But Wayne, the brother and son that he is, could never fully release his potential on baby brother, Ethan. They would play fight, laugh, and train together, but he always held back. He was protecting him, respecting him, waiting for the day Ethan would be ready.

That day never came.

It breaks my heart knowing that my son lost the one thing combat sports could have given him—the opportunity to challenge himself, to test his spirit, and to stand beside his brother as a warrior, not just as a younger sibling.

This is why SB148 matters.

It is not just about sports or competition. It is about structure, discipline, respect, and the chance to build something lasting for our youth. It is about giving fighters—our sons, daughters, nieces, and nephews—the opportunities they deserve, in a safe, regulated environment.

WHY SB148 IS NECESSARY?

SB148 would change the landscape of combat sports in Hawaii by establishing the Combat Sports Commission of Hawaii to oversee and regulate our industry. This bill is not just about bringing more events to the islands—it's about fighter safety, industry integrity, and economic growth.

This bill provides a clear and structured framework to:

- ✓ **Ensure fighter safety** through proper medical regulations, drug testing, and injury suspensions.
- ✓ **Protect the integrity of combat sports** by enforcing strict licensing and oversight for fighters, promoters, and officials.
- ✓ **Generate revenue** for Hawaii through ticket sales taxes, broadcasting rights, and promoter licensing fees.
- ✓ **Attract high-profile events** that boost tourism, local businesses, and job opportunities.

I have seen firsthand the struggles our local fighters face—from lack of event opportunities to inadequate medical protections. SB148 is a long-overdue step toward making Hawaii a premier destination for combat sports, ensuring our athletes have the opportunities and protections they deserve.

Most importantly, this bill is self-sustaining. The Combat Sports Commission will be funded through licensing fees, ticket taxes, and media rights revenues—not taxpayer dollars. Other states, such as Nevada and California, have thriving commissions that generate millions—Hawaii should not be left behind.

I urge this committee to pass SB148 and give Hawaii's combat sports community the support and structure it needs to thrive, grow, and remain competitive on the national and international stage.

Mahalo for your time and consideration.

Respectfully,

Wayne Perrin Jr.

Big Dog Fight Club

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SB-148-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/17/2025 1:47:09 PM

Testimony for CPC on 3/18/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Nowelo Miller	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Honorable Members of the Legislative Assembly,

I am in support of SB148. As a 14 year old kickboxer, this sport has taught me to be active, healthy, fit, and dicsiplined. I would like to see our sport and other combat sports have a sperate division from boxing as they do have differences.

Thank you,

Nowelo Miller

LATE

SB-148-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/17/2025 2:17:28 PM

Testimony for CPC on 3/18/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Nahum Miller	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Sb148

Honorable Members of the Legislative Assembly,

My name is Hehiapono Miller and I am in support of Bill SB148. I am a 15 year old kickboxing athlete. Through my involvement in this sport I have become fit, healthy, and disciplined. I have learned practical self defense skills and have met many good people in the community. Each event I have participated in has helped to increase my confidence. I also enjoy boxing and do see how kickboxing is different. I do think that a separate commission or division for different mma styles would benefit these sports and their communities.

Thank you for your time.

Hehiapono Miller

LATE

SB-148-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/17/2025 5:20:06 PM

Testimony for CPC on 3/18/2025 2:00:00 PM

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

Comments:

Honorable Members of the Legislative body,

My name is Jon Barnard, currently ranked the #3 flyweight and #1 featherweight contender in the world in Bare Knuckle Boxing. As a proud native of Hawaii, I have personally experienced the transformative power of combat sports. It has shaped my character, taught me discipline and resilience, and propelled me to professional success both in and out of the ring. I am writing in strong support of Bill SB148, which seeks to revitalize combat sports in Hawaii by establishing a dedicated Mixed Martial Arts Commission and reducing the detrimental influence of the Department of Commerce and Consumer Affairs (DCCA) on the industry.

The Importance of Combat Sports for Our Youth

Combat sports offer more than just physical fitness they instill self-control, discipline, respect, and perseverance. For many young athletes, especially those from underprivileged backgrounds, these sports serve as a lifeline, keeping them away from negative influences and providing a structured environment to develop their potential. Through my boxing gym and nonprofit program, I have witnessed firsthand how combat sports change lives turning struggling youth into focused, goal-driven individuals.

Many of the world's most successful professionals, from entrepreneurs to military leaders and corporate executives, credit their backgrounds in combat sports for their work ethic, resilience, and ability to perform under pressure. Fighters learn to stay calm in high-stress situations, adapt to challenges, and push past adversity qualities that translate directly to success in business, leadership, and personal growth.

The DCCA's Role in the Decline of Combat Sports in Hawaii

Hawaii was once a hub for elite-level combat sports, producing top-tier athletes who competed on the global stage. However, the Department of Commerce and Consumer Affairs (DCCA) has played a major role in the devastating decline of combat sports events in the state.

Initially, the DCCA was brought in to ensure the safety and security of combat athletes. Instead, it has choked the industry with excessive fees and bureaucratic red tape, discouraging promoters from organizing sanctioned events. Rather than enhancing safety, the DCCA has effectively forced combat sports underground, where there are no regulations, no oversight, and increased risk for athletes.

Despite collecting substantial fees from licensing and event regulation, none of that money goes back into improving the experience of combat sports in Hawaii. Instead, the DCCA operates as a taxing force, funneling funds away from the sport while securing more government jobs. It has become clear that their involvement has nothing to do with fostering a safe and thriving combat sports environment and everything to do with government overreach.

Why Hawaii Needs a Dedicated MMA Commission

To restore the integrity and growth of combat sports in Hawaii, we must establish a Mixed Martial Arts Commission that is independent of the boxing commission. If a unified combat sports commission is unavoidable, then there must be separate divisions for boxing and MMA to ensure proper governance and development.

I strongly urge the legislature to adopt the following recommendations:

1. A Separate MMA Commission – MMA and boxing should not be governed under the same entity. If a unified combat sports commission is necessary, there must be distinct divisions within it, ensuring that each sport is properly managed.
2. Reduce the Role of DCCA – The DCCA should only handle athlete licensing. If further involvement is required, they should also contribute financially by covering essential event costs, such as judges, referees, and medical personnel.

3. Mandatory Certification for Event Personnel – All coaches, referees, judges, doctors, and inspectors must undergo proper training and certification, aligning Hawaii’s standards with those of other states and countries.

4. Proper Fund Allocation – Revenue generated from licensing and other fees should be allocated separately to boxing and MMA, ensuring each division funds itself without reliance on the other. MMA should not be burdened with the financial shortcomings of professional boxing in Hawaii.

5. Follow the Las Vegas Model – The Nevada State Athletic Commission successfully oversees both boxing and MMA as separate divisions under one entity. Hawaii should adopt a similar structure to enhance governance and efficiency.

By implementing these reforms, we can revitalize combat sports in Hawaii, create a safe and structured environment for athletes, and provide pathways to success for future generations. The DCCA’s overreach has stifled the industry for too long it’s time for a commission that actually serves the athletes, promoters, and fans.

I urge you to support Bill SB148 and help restore Hawaii’s legacy in the combat sports world.

Sincerely,
Jon barnard

LATE

SB-148-HD-1

Submitted on: 3/17/2025 7:31:46 PM

Testimony for CPC on 3/18/2025 2:00:00 PM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Venus Hall	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Having family members in this sport is amazing, but having their safety at the event makes the family members at ease. it's a sport safety first.