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Testimony of the Department of Commerce and Consumer Affairs

Before the
House Committee on Economic Development & Technology
Wednesday, March 12, 2025
10:00 a.m.

Conference Room 423 and Videoconference

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

Chair Ilagan and Members of the Committee:

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) establish a new regulatory framework for combat sports contests by renaming the existing Boxing Commission of Hawaii as the Combat Sports Commission of Hawaii; (2) expand the Commission's jurisdiction to include combat sports; and (3) repeal 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 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. 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. The requirement for an ambulance to be present during 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.
3. Regarding section 440-P on page 21 line 20 to 21, and page 22, line 1 to 15, 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 each contest.
4. Page 35, lines 3 to 10, 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.

5. Page 5, section 440-7 Other employees. The Department requests 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.
6. 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.
7. 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.
8. 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.
9. Provide further flexibility to the licensed combat sports physician servicing combat sports events and contestants as it relates to the requirement listed on page 9, line 5, 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.

10. The Department requests at a minimum, a delayed implementation of one

(1) year to ensure that:

- a. The appropriate updates are made to the Professional Vocational Licensing Division's database;
- b. The Governor has the appropriate time to appoint members to the Commission; and
- c. There is no disruption in planned events.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this bill.

SB-148-SD-2

Submitted on: 3/11/2025 6:42:03 AM

Testimony for ECD on 3/12/2025 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Dylan P. Armstrong	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

Aloha mai kākou, Chair Ilagan and Vice Chair Holt, and Committee Members,

Writing in support of SB 148 SD 2.

I've testified on regulating combat sports in the past. Hawai'i has a tradition of celebrating and fostering combat sports. So when it comes to whether to support such behaviors formally with subsidies and assistance or whether you limit or even prohibit these, I generally fall on the side believing that consenting adults have personal liberties.

That does not mean I think combat sports are universally good or should always be enshrined as valid by the state. They're not.

We're only now beginning to understand the damage that American football has done to generations of young people. Combat sports are no less hazardous, physically or morally.

Do consenting adults have the right to engage in combat sports? Yes.

The industry has to be properly regulated for combatants' safety. Minors or people subjected to undue influence, including the withholding of health and safety information, or subject to medical misinformation, should never be pushed or cajoled into participating in combat sports or events.

The state ought to permit properly regulated combat sports as a strategy. It also needs to come down clearly against animal cruelty with enforceable laws.

They're the same continuum of violence, which I'm shocked nobody is connecting in conversation about these measures.

The vast majority of you have not distinguished yourselves in standing up to your own communities regarding animal cruelty, buckling your knees when residents claim that it's a proud tradition to watch animals be tortured to death. You ought to be ashamed of yourselves if so. As it stands, continue to collect your paycheck (apparently it's going to go up quite handsomely) and rule your roost, but don't call yourselves leaders if you're going to cheap out on doing the obviously right thing for the sake of keeping your titles.

This measure which I again support is only part of a much bigger picture, one of a healthier and less stupidly vicious and wasteful society.

Regards,

DYLAN P. ARMSTRONG, Ind.

SB-148-SD-2

Submitted on: 3/11/2025 10:39:51 AM

Testimony for ECD on 3/12/2025 10:00:00 AM

Submitted By	Organization	Testifier Position	Testify
Daniel Lin	Individual	Support	Written Testimony Only

Comments:

<p>My name is Daniel Lin and I am a junior at Punahou School. One of my assignments for one of my classes is to follow a bill through the Hawai‘i state legislative process regarding something we are passionate about, and I have chosen this bill.</p>
<p>I would like to share my support for this bill and why it would be greatly appreciated if it were passed. Firstly, I am a wrestler and first-hand involved in combat sports. I understand that combat sports in general are not a very popular activity and this is largely due to a lack of a platform for it to grow. This bill would create the platform needed to expand the sport in Hawai‘i because people would have the ability to compete legally and safely. As it currently stands, a large number of combat sports contests are only available through unsafe and unregulated measures, so creating the Combat Sports Commission of Hawai‘i would drastically increase the safety of our communities. It is a good idea to incorporate this into the preexisting Boxing Commission of Hawai‘i because the infrastructure is already in place for success. Also, it would give a space for the youth to be introduced to other combat sports outside of the usual and for them to cultivate what they are passionate about. As a wrestler looking to expand their skills in other martial arts, there is a very limited amount of options in Hawai‘i, so I’m hoping that creating the commission will increase the popularity of combat sports in our state in general. Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this bill.</p>

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.

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

Honorable Members of the Legislative Assembly,

My name is Nainoa Dung 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 Professional MMA fighter, and Kickboxing coach with 20 years of mixed martial arts experience. I believe that establishing a commission is essential for the growth, safety, and legitimacy of mixed martial arts in our community.

As a fighter who has competed on a high level and as a coach who has trained multiple champions I know first hand that we can compete with anyone in the world. We have so much talent here but I believe the only area we are at a disadvantage with the other states is in experience Due to lack of Events.

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. Forcing our young up and coming fighters to have to travel out of state to compete, switching sports or sadly giving up entirely on pursuing their dreams as Mixed martial artists.

I believe 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.

One commission 2 divisions 1 for boxing and 1 for Mma would be the key to success in Combats sports here in Hawaii

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.

Thank you for your consideration Nainoa Dung