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**State of Connecticut**  
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Testimony of  
Representative Matthew Lesser, 100<sup>th</sup> District  
February 22, 2011

**In Support of HB 5269, An Act Regulating Mixed Martial Arts Matches**

Good afternoon Representative Dargan, Senator Hartley and Members of the Public Safety and Security Committee,

I want to thank the Committee for raising HB 5269, An Act Regulating Mixed Martial Arts Matches.

This bill will put mixed martial arts on an equal footing with boxing, allowing the thousands of MMA fans in Connecticut the opportunity to watch their past time without leaving the state. In addition, it will generate economic activity and should be revenue positive.

At a time of great fiscal uncertainty, this is a small step to help balance our state's budget.

This bill is very simple, it simply adds "mixed martial arts" to portions of the state statutes licensing and regulating boxing.

At the present time, Connecticut is one of only five states where mixed martial arts are not legal and regulated. The others are Vermont, West Virginia, Alabama and New York.

When I introduced a proposed bill at the request of a constituent to regulate mixed martial arts, I knew very little about the sport. While some of us may not be fans ourselves, the more I have researched the issue the more it appears that allowing MMA is simply common sense. MMA has injury rates similar to other sports and studies show that it no more dangerous, and possibly less so, than boxing. Gyms all over the state teach MMA, yet the sport is presently completely unregulated.

To date, we have turned our backs on one of the fastest growing sports in the country.

While boxing is declining in viewership, MMA is exploding in popularity.

In 2008, the average gate revenues for UFC, the largest MMA promoter, were \$3 million.

MMA is already all over television in Connecticut, including Fox, Fox Sports Network, Spike TV, National Geographic Channel, Discovery Channel and others. 55 hours of television programming a month are devoted to MMA in Connecticut.

While 46 states regulate MMA, our friends in Albany have not yet elected to do so. We have a timely opportunity to attract to attract tourists and revenue from the State of New York.

It is rare in this building, and particularly this year, for any industry to come before us asking us to tax them. Yet here we have before a golden opportunity to allow businesses to operate in our state and add to our economy.

I thank the committee for its time and respectfully urge a favorable report.