

JAMES W. DONOHUE, ESQ.

1375 Trout Brook Drive ◦ West Hartford, CT 06117
jwdonohue@gmail.com ◦ (860) 299-5529

March 6, 2012

My name is James Donohue and I am here today to give testimony in support of S.B. No. 326 An Act Concerning Mixed Martial Arts. I am currently an attorney with a local Connecticut firm but in the past I have been a professional wrestler and MMA fighter. Ever since the first Mixed Martial Arts (aka MMA) bill was introduced a few years ago I have been coming to the State House hoping to educate legislators as to the benefits of regulating MMA. The benefits are two fold. First, the state opens a revenue stream previously untapped. Second, fighters are given a safe environment to hone their craft.

The regulation of MMA will allow events both large and small to take place throughout the state creating direct revenue from the licensing of fighters and team members and event taxes and fees. Additional tax revenue is generated from local businesses by providing food service and accommodations for fans and staff. To be certain, large events promoted by the UFC would bring substantial one time revenue boosts, it is the small local promoter which will generate revenue year round. Event centers as large as the XL Center and as small as the local V.F.W. could benefit greatly from promotion of the fastest growing sport in the United States. In the past the issue of the initial cost to the State has been a justified concern. While this should be a factor for the State to consider, it should also be understood that the cost will easily be returned through the event taxes and licensing. Most states that have a separate athletic commission report that they are self sufficient and there is no burden to the taxpayer.

The safety of the participants is also of paramount importance. In regulating MMA the State would seek to provide a managed and safe environment in which the local fighter can gain valuable experience with limited exposure to danger. Through the licensing of properly trained referees, mandates for medical staff and equipment inspection at every event, and fighter physicals the State can ensure the safety of the participants and enjoyment of the fans. Despite what some may describe as violence unchecked, the sport of MMA is as safe, if not safer than, boxing or other unarmed combat sports. The rules require the stoppage of fights where a fighter cannot intelligently defend himself, instead of allowing time for the fighter to temporarily regain his wits only to be struck again. As well, a fight may be won with the use of a submission move wherein the opposing fighter may tap out, or quit with honor, before any damage is done.

It should be understood by this body that the MMA community is seeking regulation by the State. It invites the reasonable restrictions that accompany such regulation and hopes only to foster a working relationship that is mutually beneficial. In passing this bill the State finds an additional revenue stream with minor initial cost to the taxpayer, and the MMA community gains the support commensurate with other combat sports.