

**Public Safety and Security Committee**

**Testimony of Keith Sheldon of AEG (Operator of the XL Center)  
In Support of S.B. No. 326,  
An Act Concerning Mixed Martial Arts**

March 6, 2012

Good afternoon Senator Hartley, Representative Dargan and members of the Public Safety and Security Committee. My name is Keith Sheldon and I am the Director of Business Affairs and Event Programming for AEG, the operator of the XL Center. I am here to testify in support of Senate Bill No. 326, An Act Concerning Mixed Martial Arts.

AEG is the world's leading provider of live entertainment and sports programming. AEG Facilities is a stand-alone division of AEG that owns, operates, and consults with more than 100 entertainment venues worldwide. AEG has operated the XL Center through a sublease with the Connecticut Development Authority ("CDA") since 2007. One of my primary responsibilities in my role with AEG is to ensure we are consistently booking first-class event content in the XL Center.

Mixed Martial Arts ("MMA") is an extremely exciting sport with a tremendous following that continues to grow worldwide. I have seen first-hand through my experience working with representatives from other AEG venues how high level MMA events, such as those sponsored by the UFC, bring record-setting crowds and revenues to venues in which they play.

I am confident that the UFC, or a similar top-notch MMA event, would result in one of the largest grossing sell-outs in the XL Center's history. Given the 10% State Admissions Tax, a \$2 million-plus ticket gross (which is the norm in other AEG venues) would be a financial boon to the State. Moreover, a sold-out event with such widespread appeal acts as an economic driver for the capital region bringing increased spending to downtown restaurants, bars, parking lots, and hotels.

Perhaps most importantly, MMA represents job creation in Connecticut. For a high-level MMA event, the XL Center would ramp-up operational and staffing needs, which ultimately means the manifestation of several hundred jobs at the XL Center alone through stagehand, guest service, box office, and custodial labor.

Finally, sport is a business in which people – the athletes and fans – are the most valuable commodity. Accordingly, the issue of the safety of both the XL Center guests and the event participants is of our highest concern. This bill seeks to place MMA under the jurisdiction of the State Boxing Commission. This legislation would allow the Commissioner of the

Department of Emergency Services and Public Protection to adopt regulations to regulate the conduct, supervision and safety of MMA matches, including the licensing of sponsors and participants of such matches, and to set a reasonable fee for the issuance of licenses to sponsors and participants in MMA matches. We believe this is appropriate to ensure that the contests are both fair and safe.

For the foregoing reasons, I urge the Committee to vote in favor of this legislation.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Keith Sheldon  
Director, Business Affairs  
AEG / XL Center