

Edward E Thornton  
Bristol, CT 06010  
Owner of Thornton Martial Arts, 701 Main St., East Hartford, CT 06108  
Email: [thorntonmartialartsservice@gmail.com](mailto:thorntonmartialartsservice@gmail.com)  
Phone (860) 289-1662

**TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HB 5201 AN ACT CONCERNING MUAY THAI AS A  
FORM OF MIXED MARTIAL ARTS**

My name is Edward E. Thornton and I am here to testify in support of HB 5201, An Act Concerning Muay Thai as a Form of Mixed Martial Arts. I am a resident of Bristol CT and own a martial arts studio located in East Hartford, CT.

This bill is important to me and the dozens of martial arts studio owners across the state because it would allow us to hold Muay Thai youth tournaments in Connecticut, which are currently prohibited by DEPS. Mixed Martial Arts (MMA) was legalized in CT in 2013, HB 5277, and although almost 50% of the Mixed Martial Arts is based on the striking art of Muay Thai, Muay Thai itself has not been legalized in CT.

Muay Thai or Thai Boxing is the national sport and cultural martial art of Thailand. It is a respect based sport steeped in the culture of Thailand that dates back centuries. It was developed as a form of close-combat that utilizes the entire body. This discipline is known as the "art of eight limbs" as it is characterized by the combined use of fists, elbows, knees and shins.

Today, Muay Thai is becoming very popular on a global scale and was recently accepted as an Olympic sport. As new training camps and gyms open around the world, Muay Thai will continue to grow in popularity. Unlike MMA it is not the violence that wins the competition but your control of yourself mentally and physically, down to even your posture, that dictates the winner.

***How is the Sport Governed?***

In the United States Muay Thai is governed by the United States Muay Thai Federation (USMF) and internationally in over 100 countries by the IFMA (International Federation of Muay Thai Associations).

In CT, MMA is authorized under CGS 29-143j and mixed martial arts studios and tournaments are under the authority of the CT Department of Public Safety.

***How does Muay Thai develop youth and keep children safe?***

The USMF has a Youth Development League where children as young as 6 years old can start to compete in the sport of Muay Thai. They are carefully tracked and monitored. They must progress and compete in a certain number of competitions before graduating to the next level. Unlike boxing students are not permitted head contact until the age of twelve and it is only after

they have earned their credentials. Roughly 300 young Muay Thai athletes have taken part this year in Youth Development Leagues across America.

***Why Legalize Muay Thai in Connecticut?***

Youth league tournaments cannot be held in CT and so our children must travel to other states to compete. Studio owners also lose out on crucial revenue needed to keep our businesses open. The Covid-19 pandemic hit small business owners hard and many have closed. This bill would help us put food on the table for our families and provide the much needed physiological and social-emotional support our children need.

Muay Thai as a sport has gained popularity in the last 15 years and deserves the chance to be practiced and competed legally in CT. We are asking the legislature to do the right thing and allow this sport to have the equal rights that practitioners of soccer and football have in this state. To be able to practice and compete in their sport legally. There is no reason to not allow it, other than it is new.

~~[In November 2016 the I.O.C. granted Provisional Recognition to the sport of Muay Thai due to the efforts of IFMA. Each country has an appointed national federation that follows the guidelines (rules, regulations and ethics) of IFMA and therefore the I.O.C. The USMF is the SOLE national federation in the United States. Currently, the USMF has submitted our application to the U.S.O.C. (United States Olympic Committee) and pending the imminent approval of the application, the USMF will govern the Amateur Olympic style of the sport in the United States much like USA Boxing, USA Volleyball, USA Soccer, USATF (Track and Field) etc.]~~