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

My name is Richard G Wolfson and I am providing a written testimony in support of HB 5201, An Act Concerning Muay Thai as a Form of Mixed Martial Arts. I am a resident of Simsbury and have been a student of Muay Thai since my first visit to Thailand in 2005..

This bill is important to me and the dozens of martial arts studio owners and their respective students across the state because it would allow the respective gyms 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. I have had the opportunity to travel many times (in part due to my wife is from Thailand) and train on many occasions at Sityodtong Muay Thai Camp. This facility is steeped in tradition as a Muay Thai school founded by Kru Yodtong Senanan who is regarded as one of many contemporary fathers of Muay Thai in Thailand. In addition to producing Muay Thai fighters and more importantly this Camp/school is also an orphanage where young thai children live and learn many lessons of life such as respect for others.

A traditional Muay Thai fight is more a cultural event with prefight displays of what is referred to as Wai Kru Ram Muay which is a Muay Thai ritual in which students show respect and gratitude to their teachers, parents and ancestors. This tradition is also prevalent at any Muay Thai fight outside Thailand and here in the West. In fact many of the traditional Muay Thai fights is more a display of targeted hits to certain parts of the body to score a point rather than a bloody brawl inside a ring.

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.

Sincerely,

*Richard G. Wolfson*

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