



**Written Testimony of Andy Foster
Executive Officer, California State Athletic Commission**

Submitted to the
Subcommittee on Workforce Protections
House Committee on Education and Workforce

Hearing on Professional Boxing

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Chairman Mackenzie, Ranking Member Omar and Subcommittee Members, thank you for the opportunity to discuss H.R. 4624, the Muhammad Ali American Boxing Revival Act.

My name is Andy Foster, and I am the Executive Officer of the California State Athletic Commission (Commission), a role that has allowed me to advocate for and strengthen health and safety protections for combat athletes for more than thirteen years. I previously served as the Executive Director and head mixed martial arts referee for the Georgia Athletic and Entertainment Commission. Prior to that, I was fortunate to have a long career as a professional mixed martial arts fighter and instructor, and amateur mixed martial arts fighter, boxer, and kickboxer. In addition, I have experience as a promoter. From 2014 to 2024, I have been selected as the Executive Officer of the Year by the North American Boxing Federation. Earlier this year, I had the extraordinary honor of being inducted into the National Boxing Hall of Fame.

My life and my professional career have been dedicated to combat sports, which makes this a sincere honor to provide this testimony on behalf of the California State Athletic Commission.

The Commission regulates professional and amateur boxing, kickboxing and mixed martial arts throughout the State by licensing all participants, supervising the events, and promoting the health, safety, and welfare of athletes. With that mission in mind, the Commission supports the reforms to strengthen boxing industry standards and protections for boxers in H.R. 4624, which would establish a minimum payment per round, also known as a purse, establish minimum medical insurance coverage, and medical examinations and tests for every fighter in this country. While establishing an industry minimum purse of \$150 per round may not sound like a lot of money, it is a significant improvement from the one-dollar contracts that fighters sign every weekend across the country. Often, a boxer has to pay a promoter for the opportunity to fight on a card, resulting in a deeper financial deficit. I have personally witnessed fighters get knocked out, cut, or otherwise injured with one dollar to show for their efforts. In 2016, California stopped this practice by adopting a regulation that established a \$100 per round minimum purse. And in 2024, Governor Gavin Newsom signed a Commission sponsored bill that increased the minimum in California to \$200 per round. California is one of only four states in the nation with a purse minimum and it also has the highest minimum in the country. Forty-four states currently have no minimums – and one dollar fight contracts are happening every weekend across the nation. The minimum purse requirement in H.R. 4624 will ensure a boxer who fights a four-round bout will have at least \$600.

Injuries in boxing can be extensive and expensive. H.R. 4624 will also establish a minimum medical insurance policy for each event, requiring coverage of a minimum \$25,000, with no deductible required to be paid for by the boxer. Should a more significant injury arise requiring an overnight stay and an MRI, CT scan, or emergency surgery, this minimum will assist in covering those bills. More importantly, it is a good public policy to ensure the health and safety of fighters. Most states require less than a \$25,000 medical insurance policy per event, and medical bills that exceed those states' minimums are often uncollectable.

While many states have minimum medical requirements a boxer must meet, some states require only a basic physical examination for licensure. This bill will require boxers to obtain a physical exam, eye exam, and lab tests for hepatitis B, hepatitis C and HIV. In addition, this bill this would establish a federal minimum if signed into law and state commissions could choose to exceed the minimum medical requirements set forth in the bill. It is important to reiterate that these minimum provisions would apply to every professional boxer at every bout in this country.

The California State Athletic Commission voted unanimously to support H.R 4624 and include an amendment in the bill to automatically increase the purse and medical insurance minimums based on inflation over time. If this mechanism to account for inflation is added, the Commission looks forward to supporting this bill. California has a substantial interest in H.R 4624 as our state regulates more combat sports than any other state by far. California is the only state with a Boxers' Pension Fund, so establishing these minimum standards with an inflation adjustment over time, are important protections for the athletes and the industry.

The Commission also supports the Unified Boxing Organization (UBO) model proposed in the bill. This model enhances the level of medical protections provided to boxers, in line with health and safety standards already established in California. The UBO model will allow fighters to have a choice between the current four-belt system and the proposed UBO system. Fighter choice is always good, and I see no mechanism in the bill to allow the charging of sanction fees for a belt under the UBO system. The current sanctioning bodies for professional boxing -- the World Boxing Council (WBC), the World Boxing Association (WBA), the World Boxing Organization (WBO), and the International Boxing Federation (IBF) -- all require payment of sanction and belt fees, among others. These fees are charged to both the boxer and the promoter, however,

the boxer's fees are deducted from their purses. These deductions, which are in addition to the boxers' training expenses, would not happen under the UBO model.

Boxers under the UBO model may struggle to gain rankings or title opportunities within the four-belt system due to its exclusivity. The option for a boxer to choose between a UBO model and a four-belt system should be a choice for that boxer.

The current four-belt model that has been enshrined into boxing is in part due to the firewall established in the original Muhammad Ali Boxing Reform Act. This firewall effectively prevented promoter-owned organizations from creating their own belts and rankings, and as a result, the four major sanctioning bodies remain the dominant authorities for titles and rankings. This unknowingly created a self-serving financial incentive to manufacture titles, protect individual boxer rankings, and make mandatory challenges within each organization an annual requirement. The solution is not to repeal existing protections, but to offer an alternative to boxers. One alternative is the UBO model under this bill, which will offer an alternative to the current four-belt system, foster healthy competition and promote U.S. based fighters.

Another key positive aspect of this bill is that the UBO model shifts the nature of the industry and would be less exploitative to boxers signed to a UBO.

In the UBO model, the promoter would have an interest in making the more competitive fights since both boxers are under the "league" style model. The UBO model would largely eliminate the "A" side versus the "B" side since the promoter has signed both sides of the card, and the financial interest shifts from making sure the "A" side wins, to contracting a match that the public will be excited to watch.

In summary, professional boxers need help to achieve labor equity. H.R. 4624 provides significant protections for boxers in a profession with high risk and low pay, by

providing at least \$600 for a four-round bout and guaranteed medical insurance coverage with no deductible. The UBO model provides another choice for boxers while not disturbing the four-belt system and the Muhammad Ali Boxing Reform Act. This bill will also provide an innovative mechanism to develop U.S. based boxers.

For these reasons, the California State Athletic Commission urges the Subcommittee on Workforce Protections and Congress to support H.R. 4624, a bipartisan bill, and respectfully requests an amendment to add a cost-of-living increase for the minimum purse and minimum medical insurance requirements.

CALIFORNIA STATE ATHLETIC COMMISSION

The California State Athletic Commission regulates professional and amateur boxing, kickboxing, and mixed martial arts throughout California by licensing all participants and supervising the events. The Commission constantly seeks methods to make combat sports safer by focusing on techniques to lessen traumatic brain injuries, educating athletes about the adverse effects of the practice of dehydration and weight cutting, regular training of inspectors and officials, and careful and thoughtful approval of professional and amateur matches. www.dca.ca.gov/csac

ANDY FOSTER

EXECUTIVE OFFICER, CALIFORNIA STATE ATHLETIC COMMISSION

Mr. Foster has served as the Commission's as Executive Officer since 2012. He previously served as Executive Director of the Georgia Athletic and Entertainment Commission and also as Regional Director of the Southeastern United States for the Association of Boxing Commissions. Before his appointment as a regulator, Mr. Foster served as the head mixed martial arts (MMA) referee for the Georgia Commission, officiating hundreds of bouts in both professional and amateur rule sets. Mr. Foster has also competed in professional MMA, amateur MMA, amateur boxing, amateur kickboxing, and amateur sport grappling. In addition, he instructed martial arts between 2002-2008 and trained many martial artists.

Mr. Foster currently serves in the Association of Boxing Commissions as Chairman of the Unified Amateur Mixed Martial Arts Rules Committee, Chairman of the Governmental Affairs Committee, and member of the Professional Mixed Martial Arts Rules Committee, Boxing and MMA Matchmaking Committee, MMA Judging Committee, and MMA Training Committee.

Mr. Foster attended the Andrew Young School of Policy Studies at Georgia State University and earned a bachelor's of science in Public Policy.