

GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA



DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA COMBAT SPORTS COMMISSION

Public Hearing on
B26-0026, the “Theatrical Wrestling Regulation Amendment Act of 2025”

Testimony of Andrew Huff
Chairperson, Combat Sports Commission

The Honorable Zachary Parker
Chairperson, the Committee on Youth Affairs
Council of the District of Columbia
1350 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20004

Wednesday, March 25, 2026, 3 p.m.
John A. Wilson Building - Room 123

Good afternoon, Chairperson Parker, members of the Committee on Youth Affairs, and staff. I am Andrew Huff, Chairperson of the D.C. Combat Sports Commission (“Commission”). The Commission regulates boxing, professional wrestling, kickboxing, martial arts, and mixed martial arts in the District of Columbia (“District”), and it protects participants and consumers by enforcing the District’s combat sports laws and regulations. The Commission consists of five volunteer members who are appointed by the Mayor and confirmed by the Council of the District of Columbia. In addition to me, the Commission is composed of Kimberly Lockett, Shawn Townsend, and Chris Jenkins.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today regarding Bill 26-0026, the “Theatrical Wrestling Regulation Amendment Act of 2025”. This bill would amend the Boxing and Wrestling Commission Act of 1975 to update its exemptions, including establishing an exemption for a new class of combat sports, theatrical wrestling. The bill would also add the term “theatrical wrestling” to the Act, defining it, in part, as sports entertainment that “takes place in a venue with a total audience capacity of fewer than 2,000 attendees, or as part of a festival or other special event.”

The Commission supports the intent of B26-0026, which is to reduce the barriers to independent wrestling events in the District. It welcomes the opportunity to work with the Council to bring independent wrestling events to the District. In addition to regulating combat sports and protecting the participants and consumers associated with the events, Commission members also act as ambassadors for combat sporting events in the District. Last year, I provided written testimony in support of legislation to designate the District as the official sports capital of the United States, and the Commission looks forward to working with Events DC and District government, in attracting and retaining sporting events, including independent wrestling.

The Council and the Commission are aligned in our desire to ease barriers to combat sports events. The Commission strives to encourage combat sports events, including independent wrestling, and to protect the safety and well-being of the wrestlers and attendees. To that end, the Commission has adjusted the medical requirements for a wrestler. Whereas wrestlers were previously required to submit medical paperwork to the Commission every six months, they now must do so annually; thereby, reducing the administrative burdens on wrestlers while continuing to protect their health and safety.

The Commission has also lowered the licensing fees to ease the financial strain of holding independent wrestling events in the District. It has lowered the fee for a promoter's license to \$130 to attract promoters and support smaller independent promotions. This is lower than the fee charged by both Maryland and Virginia, \$150 and \$500, respectively. Also, during my time as Chair, the Commission has reduced the fee for a wrestler's license from \$200 to \$25. This is more aligned with Maryland's and Virginia's wrestling license fees, which are \$10 and \$40, respectively.

While the Commission supports the intent of the legislation, we have several concerns about the bill as currently drafted. First, the legislation would create a new combat sports event, theatrical wrestling, and exempt it from the oversight of the Commission. This would be inconsistent with Maryland and Virginia. Both states recognize wrestling, not theatrical wrestling. Maryland licenses professional wrestlers. Virginia licenses wrestlers and wrestling events. These inconsistencies could hinder future Commission efforts to adopt licensure by endorsement and could limit the professional mobility of licensed wrestlers.

Second, the legislation would exempt professional wrestling that takes place at a venue with a total audience capacity of fewer than 2,000 attendees. However, venue and crowd size do

not alter the health and safety dangers that the wrestlers face in the ring. There are well-known and inherent dangers when individuals jump 10 feet in the air from the turn buckle onto concrete floors, wooden slats, and each other. Larger wrestling events like World Wrestling Entertainment and All Elite Wrestling have a traveling medical and training staff, which helps to mitigate the health and safety risks. At the independent level, however, wrestlers are responsible for their own health and fitness, making it even more important that Commission-approved doctors examine the wrestlers, and ensure the availability of an ambulance on site during the event.

Venue and crowd size also do not alter the consumer protections that attendees of wrestling events should be afforded. Tickets for all wrestling events, regardless of size, should include the price, name of the promoter, date, and place of the event. This bill would not require tickets at smaller events to do so and would thus diminish protection to consumers.

In addition to the concerns about the impact of deregulating small venue events on wrestlers and consumers, recent actions taken by the Commission make the bill's proposed exemption of wrestling that takes place as part of "a festival or special event" unnecessary. The Commission updated the requirements regarding licensure for wrestling taking place at a festival or special event. Under these new requirements, wrestling at such an event only requires a wrestler's license, instead of both a wrestler's license and a promoter's license. Accordingly, the Commission would advise removing this requirement from the existing bill to avoid any confusion or duplication, as these regulatory actions strike an appropriate balance between wrestler safety and reducing costs and administrative burden.

The Commission is amenable to easing barriers to combat sports events, including independent wrestling, in the District. My testimony identifies a few changes that have been

made to adjust the medical requirements and licensing fees for wrestlers and to eliminate the promoter's license for wrestling at festivals and special events. The Commission is in constant conversations with stakeholders, including promoters, and will continue to make changes that do not compromise the health and safety of participants and attendees.

I would like to again thank the Committee for allowing me to testify. The Commission looks forward to working with the Committee on this and other efforts. With that, I am happy to answer any questions you may have.