



COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA  
Department of State  
State Athletic Commission

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House State Government Committee  
Room 205 Ryan Office Building  
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Good afternoon Chairwoman Josephs, Chairman Baker and members of the House State Government Committee. Thank you for inviting the Department of State here today to provide testimony on House Bill 2555 which makes several revisions to the Boxing, Wrestling and Athlete Agents Acts. For the record, my name is Gregory Sirb and I am the Executive Director of the Pennsylvania State Athletic Commission (Commission). I have served as executive director of the Commission since 1990. Today, I am representing the Secretary of the Commonwealth, Pedro A. Cortés, and will share with you information and background on H.B. 2555.

I would like to commend the Chair, this Committee, Representative Gergely and the sponsors of H.B. 2555 for addressing several aspects of these laws that the Commission believes require updating or clarification in order for the Commission to better regulate boxing, wrestling and athlete agents. H.B. 2555 makes six key amendments to Title 5 (Athletes and Sports) of which I will describe.

First, the bill authorizes the State Athletic Commission to enter into interstate compacts and/or agreements, as authorized by federal law, to supervise professional boxing in states with no commission or on tribal reservations. Currently, the Commission may not enter into such an agreement without authorizing legislation. The Commission has been approached by the State of Delaware, Division of Professional Regulation, to enter into a memorandum of understanding, pursuant to which the Commission would supervise professional boxing matches conducted in Delaware. Delaware has no boxing commission, but has casinos which host professional boxing events several times a year. The Department anticipates that revenues generated from these Delaware events will be between \$5,000-\$10,000 per year.

Second, H.B. 2555 removes the ages for amateur boxers specified by statute in favor of conformity with local amateur boxing association rules on age of participation. Pursuant to the bill, local rules must be approved by the Commission. Presently, the law prohibits a person under the age of 18 from participating in professional boxing contests or exhibitions; however, the law specifies exemptions for participation in amateur boxing, with a minimum age of 12 for events under Commission regulations and minimum age of 10 for Junior Olympic events. The ages and categories as prescribed by statute for amateur boxers are unduly restrictive because the National Amateur Association (USA Boxing) currently allows 8, 9 and 10 year olds to compete at the local level. Because 10 years old is the youngest permissible age in Pennsylvania, a 10 year old from Pennsylvania could be placed in the disadvantageous position of facing another 10 year old in a USA Boxing match outside of the State who has already competed in 10-15 bouts

because he has been boxing since he was 8. This amendment would simply comply with USA Boxing regulations as is the case in most states.

Third, this legislation gives the Commission authority to set glove weights by regulation. As it is written, the Boxing Act only provides for two categories of weights of boxing gloves, based on boxer weight. As the categories of weights of boxers get heavier, the glove weights specified by the Act are insufficient. Setting glove weights by regulation will allow the Commission to better respond to weight trends and changes in glove technology. This change will also enable the Commission to keep pace with national standards and trends relating to glove weight.

Fourth, H.B. 2555 clarifies that a professional wrestling promoter produces, arranges or stages professional wrestling *contests* and exhibitions. The current definition of “wrestling promoter” inexplicably leaves out the concept of producing, arranging or staging professional wrestling *contests*, in which the wrestlers strive earnestly to win. The remainder of the Wrestling Act uses the words *contest* and *exhibition* interchangeably. This change will also remove any argument that promoters may make that the Commission does not have jurisdiction over promoter actions in producing, arranging or staging professional wrestling contests.

Fifth, the bill permits the option of an ambulance with emergency medical personnel to be at ringside, in lieu of physician attendance at wrestling events. The Wrestling Act presently requires a physician to be in attendance at every wrestling contest or exhibition,

at the expense of the promoter. The mandatory attendance of a physician is overly burdensome and costly. It is becoming difficult for promoters to find physicians who agree to serve at ringside, as typical liability insurance held by doctors does not cover their duties at these events. Also most ringside physicians summon an ambulance with emergency medical personnel as soon as there is an injury and relinquish care of the injured wrestler to the emergency responders.

Last, this legislation eliminates the bonding requirements for athlete agents who recruit professional athletes only and who are registered with a professional players association as an agent. The Uniform Athlete Agents Act presently requires the execution of a surety bond in the amount of at least \$20,000 before the issuance of any athlete agent registration. The Uniform Athlete Agents Act, as enacted in Pennsylvania, is not uniform with other states in that it defines athlete agents as persons who enter into an agency contract with *an individual* or a student athlete or directly or indirectly recruit or solicit *an individual* or a student athlete to enter into an agency contract to negotiate on behalf of *the individual* or student athlete one or more professional sports services contracts. "Individual" is defined by the Statutory Construction Act as "a natural person." Therefore, agents who represent only professional athletes in transfers from one professional team to another are required to register in Pennsylvania with the Commission. In other states which have adopted the Uniform Athlete Agents Act, agents who represent professional players only are not required to register or file a bond with the state. Professional athletes require less protection than student athletes because professional athletes have their own professional players associations, and many agents

are required to purchase professional liability insurance in order to be registered or certified by the relevant players association for the sport. For example, the National Football League (NFL) Players Association requires agents to purchase professional liability insurance of at least \$1,000,000 to cover their activities as agents. The application process to obtain approval from most professional player associations to act as an agent is quite rigorous, with extensive background checks and financial disclosures.

Again, the Department and the Pennsylvania State Athletic Commission enthusiastically support H.B. 2555 and believe that the provisions in the bill are necessary to better regulate boxing, wrestling and athlete agents. Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you. I welcome any questions you may have.