

Nico Ali Walsh's Written Testimony for the Record

U.S. Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation

Chairman Cruz, Ranking Member Cantwell, and members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today.

My name is Nico Ali Walsh. I am a professional boxer and the grandson of Muhammad Ali. I'm here as someone whose name is directly tied to the Muhammad Ali Boxing Reform Act, not just as a fighter affected by it, but as part of the legacy that law represents.

To build on Mr. De La Hoya's statements, fighters are labeled independent contractors.

As a result, people say fighters will have options; that we can just go elsewhere. But when the same company controls who you fight, how you're promoted, and whether fans ever see you, it's not much of a choice. When one system controls access, "choice" becomes theoretical, not real.

The Ali Act was built on a simple principle: the people controlling fighters should not also control the entire marketplace those fighters depend on. That separation exists to prevent conflicts of interest and exploitation. These are the firewall provisions in the current Act.

The new Muhammad Ali Boxing Revival Act would undermine that principle. By allowing one entity to operate across promotion, management, and matchmaking, it removes independence and replaces an open market with a controlled structure.

When that happens, negotiation changes. Fighters are no longer dealing with competing opportunities; they are dealing with a system that controls access, structure, and terms. If fighters cannot clearly see how value is created and distributed, they cannot negotiate on equal ground.

This type of centralized system is already seen in mixed martial arts, particularly in the UFC, where a single organization controls promotion, matchmaking, and fighter contracts. In that model, fighters typically receive under 20% of the revenue, compared to boxing, where fighters can earn up to 80%.

Prizefighting has always been rooted in open competition for a purse. The newly proposed Revival Act is entertainment—centrally controlled—and presented as athletic competition behind the claim that boxing is "broken."

Boxing is not broken. If it were, UFC champions, at the height of their careers, would not be actively targeting boxing fights because of the fair pay. That movement is rarely seen in reverse due to the UFC's centralized pay structure.

Boxing has never been perfect, but one of its strengths has always been competition. Multiple promoters competing for fighters creates leverage, opportunity, and fair market value. When that competition is replaced by consolidation, leverage disappears.

And once fighters lose leverage, they do not get it back, because every contract, every negotiation, and every career decision is shaped by that structure moving forward.

This isn't abstract. I'm living it. Fighters understand that speaking up can come with severe professional consequences. That reality creates silence long before anything is ever said.

I've personally benefited from the protections that exist today.

After one of my fights, I was notified that my opponent tested positive for performance-enhancing drugs. That fight was ruled a no contest. That process, testing, enforcement, and oversight worked; and it protected me.

In another fight, I suffered a severe shoulder injury in the ring that required surgery shortly after. The current system ensured I received immediate medical attention and proper care throughout my recovery.

These are real examples of the system working to protect fighters.

That's the point; protections should be strengthened, especially around health and safety, but not used as justification to restructure the sport in a way that removes power from fighters.

The bill that the House has passed should not be adopted. We can protect fighters more effectively than we do today without concentrating control over them.

If this bill is passed in its current form, it should not have my grandfather's name on it, as it would no longer reflect the principles that his Act was created to protect.

He fought for dignity outside the ring. This is about dignity inside it. Fighters should not have to choose between their careers and their rights.

55 years ago this year, my grandfather stood in the Supreme Court, before this government, and took a stand for what he believed in. He did it knowing there would be consequences. He did it knowing it could cost him everything.

And this country, at its best, recognized the principle behind that stand.

Today, I'm here decades later, in that same spirit, not as a symbol, but as a fighter living through the reality of this system.

This moment is not about the past; it's about whether we continue to stand on those same principles now.

And I believe we will.

Thank you for your time.