

Opening Statement of Ranking Member Ilhan Omar (MN-05)

Subcommittee on Workforce Protections

"In Their Corner: Creating More Opportunities for American Boxers"

Thursday, December 4th, 2025 | 10:15 a.m.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you to our witnesses for your testimony today.

When Republicans first notified us of today's hearing, I was immediately excited. I have long been a fan of professional boxing and mixed martial arts, and I was hopeful that we could have a bipartisan discussion about revitalizing a sport that I love. I came to this issue not just as a legislator, but as someone who admires the courage and craft of fighters who put their bodies on the line in the pursuit of greatness.

At the turn of the century, Congress passed two landmark pieces of legislation to protect and support American boxers. In 1996, Congress passed the *Professional Boxing Safety Act* (or the PBSA), which outlined health and safety provisions and mandated state athletic commissions to oversee all professional boxing events. In 2000, Congress strengthened the PBSA with the *Muhammad Ali Boxing Reform Act*.

The *Ali Act* was designed to clean up the business side of boxing after decades of corruption that harmed boxers' livelihoods and the integrity of the sport. It required better financial disclosures, increased transparency of ranking and title decisions, and limited conflicts of interest so that a single company or individual could not both control a boxer's contract and access to titles. This was meant to stop promoters from demanding that boxers sign away their entire career just to have a chance at a title.

In practice, the Ali Act's provisions helped give boxers more information and leverage to negotiate for a fairer share of the money that their fights generated and free themselves from any coercive and restrictive contract terms. We should build on these successes and take time to explore other critical issues, such as the long-term cost of brain injury and the need for athletes in other combat sports, like MMA, to enjoy these protections.

My hope is that we can use this hearing to discuss these issues thoughtfully and productively. However, my fear is that we are likely to focus on just one bill—H.R. 4624, the *Muhammad Ali American Boxing Revival Act*—and consider moving it quickly.

But I urge my colleagues to take a moment to pause and hold two things in our minds at once. First, there are some genuinely promising provisions in the Revival Act. For example, a national one hundred and fifty dollar per-round minimum payment would lessen financial strain on boxers who are still finding their footing in the sport. The bill would also set a national twenty-five-thousand-dollar floor for insurance coverage that the PBSA currently requires for every fight.

Unfortunately, there are sections of the Revival Act that raise serious questions about who will *actually* control the future of boxing. It would remove guardrails that prevent influential promoters from controlling the industry and forcing boxers into contracts that they do not benefit from. This legislation could also allow major

corporations to completely take over the sport, leaving boxers without the leverage or the ability to advocate for themselves and their physical and financial health.

These provisions prioritize Goliath to the detriment of David. Boxers, who put their bodies on the line, deserve to fight in an industry that pays them well, values their health and safety, and does not make them vulnerable to economic exploitation. While not entirely harmful, this bill – as drafted – gives more power to promoters and big corporations than to boxers. This is why many professional boxers are speaking out against it, including Evander Holyfield, Oscar de la Hoya, Claressa Shields, Jake Paul, and Nico Ali Walsh.

I am not here to reflexively support or oppose H.R. 4624. I am here to ask important questions to everyone involved—the promoters, the regulators, and especially the corporations that stand to gain the most. Because we have to make sure that any “revival” of boxing does not come at the expense of the very athletes we say we are here to protect.

I want this hearing to be the start of a longer, serious bipartisan conversation about how we support our boxers and bring investment into the sport without sacrificing the necessary anti-monopoly firewalls that prevent American boxers from being exploited by powerful corporate actors and foreign investors.

I look forward to our discussion today, and I yield back.