



June 12, 2025

The Honorable Gus Bilirakis  
Chairman  
Subcommittee on Commerce,  
Manufacturing and Trade Washington,  
D.C. 20515

The Honorable Jan Schakowsky  
Ranking Member  
Subcommittee on Commerce,  
Manufacturing and Trade  
Washington, D.C. 20515

**RE: Letter for the Record: "Winning Off the Field: Legislative Proposal to Stabilize NIL and College Athletics"**

Dear Chairman Bilirakis, Ranking Member Schakowsky, and Members of the Subcommittee,

On behalf of the American Volleyball Coaches Association, College Swimming and Diving Coaches Association, Collegiate Rifle Coaches Association, Collegiate Rowing Coaches Association, Collegiate Water Polo Coaches Association, Intercollegiate Women's Lacrosse Coaches Association, National Fastpitch Coaches Association, National Field Hockey Coaches Association, National Wrestling Coaches Association, U.S. Fencing Coaches Association, and U.S. Track & Field and Cross-Country Coaches Association, thank you for the opportunity to share our perspective as you consider legislative solutions to address the evolving college sports landscape. The release of the *Student Compensation and Opportunity through Rights and Endorsements (SCORE) Act* discussion draft and today's hearing are important steps forward in providing much-needed stability to college sports, and we applaud you for your leadership.

As representatives of college coaches in broad-based, Olympic sports programs, we understand the importance of addressing the unique challenges faced by our programs. The ability to maintain broad-based sports programs in the transforming world of college sports is increasingly at risk, leaving us gravely concerned about opportunities for present and future student-athletes.

***The Importance of Broad-Based Programs***

Broad-based sports programs are a cornerstone of college athletics, profoundly benefitting the lives of students, universities, and communities. These programs serve as pathways to higher education, often for individuals who might not have otherwise had access. The core mission of higher education is enhanced by participation in our sports, as they exemplify

excellence in teamwork, leadership, and resilience. Beyond the playing field, our programs play a pivotal role in shaping future leaders, as the majority of student-athletes say that participating in college sports equips them with the skills needed to succeed in life after graduation.

Furthermore, broad-based sports programs at colleges and universities serve as a key pipeline for U.S. Olympic Teams and are critical to maintaining our competitive edge on the global stage. Seventy-five percent of Team USA's 2024 Paris Olympic Team consisted of current or former student-athletes. Unlike our competitors around the world, the United States relies on our schools and universities to produce our Olympic pipeline as opposed to statefunded academies. We lead the world in many Olympic sports precisely because of our college athletics system, and without it, our nation risks losing its global athletic dominance.

### ***House v. NCAA Settlement - A Step Forward for Some***

Judge Claudia Wilken's approval of the House v. NCAA settlement marked significant progress in addressing the transforming world of college athletics. However, the settlement falls short in protecting the future of programs outside of football and basketball – programs where 76% of Division I student-athletes participate. The new financial obligations placed on schools will undoubtedly lead to administrators diverting resources away from broad-based sports programs to support football and basketball. This shift is already evident – since the settlement was announced, 36 Division I Olympic sports programs have been eliminated, impacting over 1,000 student-athletes. These decisions occurred before the settlement's approval, and our associations have had direct conversations with administrators who anticipate even more cuts. The approval of the settlement is merely an important step forward for some, and we are concerned that it steers us towards a future of college sports that disproportionately benefits a small fraction of the NCAA student-athlete population while jeopardizing opportunities for others.

### ***Student Compensation and Opportunity through Rights and Endorsements (SCORE) Act***

We were encouraged by the release of the *SCORE Act* discussion draft and are grateful for the leadership of Chairman Guthrie and Chairman Bilirakis to bring much-needed clarity and stability to college athletics. We support the bill's efforts to establish clear guidelines, protect the NIL rights of student-athletes, provide medical and health benefits, and preempt state law – policies that are not only necessary but essential to ensuring the long-term sustainability of college athletics. We are particularly supportive of the legislation's provisions to make clear that student-athletes are not classified as employees, as proposals to the contrary would lead to drastic cuts and likely the elimination of most broad-based sports programs altogether. By appropriately addressing the unique relationship between schools and athletes, the *SCORE Act* is taking an important step in protecting the future of broad-based sports programs.

Importantly, a legislative solution must also incorporate two priorities to provide further certainty that broad-based sports programs are not sidelined in the evolving collegiate model:

- 1. Maintain current NCAA bylaws on minimum sports sponsorship requirements:** Division I FBS institutions are currently required to sponsor at least 16 varsity sports, while FCS and Division I non-football institutions are required to sponsor a minimum of 14.
- 2. Maintain current spending ratios:** Using historical trends, institutions should meet a baseline threshold in allocating their operating budget to sports beyond football and basketball. By codifying proportional spending targets, Congress can safeguard investment in broad-based sports and prevent institutions from eliminating or reducing programs to better serve football and basketball.

These proposals are not new mandates, but rather reaffirmations of the system that schools have voluntarily followed for decades. Congressional support for these provisions would help protect a proven model before it becomes undermined by financial uncertainty. Protecting existing requirements of schools to maintain robust sport sponsorship and a meaningful allocation of resources for non-football and non-basketball programs will ensure a future of college sports that is balanced and equitable for all student-athletes.

Sincerely,

American Volleyball Coaches Association  
College Swimming and Diving Coaches Association  
Collegiate Rifle Coaches Association  
Collegiate Rowing Coaches Association  
Collegiate Water Polo Coaches Association  
Intercollegiate Women's Lacrosse Coaches Association  
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