

**Statement of Subcommittee Member Yvette D. Clarke**  
**Committee on Energy and Commerce**  
**Subcommittee on Commerce, Manufacturing, and Trade**

***Hearing on “Winning Off the Field: Legislative Proposal to Stabilize NIL and College Athletics”***

*June 12, 2025*

Thank you to my dear friend, Ranking Member Schakowsky for yielding some of her time, and thank you to our panel of witnesses for joining us today.

The landscape of college sports has undergone a rapid transformation over the last decade, including with the recent settlement in the landmark House vs. NCAA lawsuit.

But one thing remains: the enduring popularity of college athletics.

College football remains the second most watched sport in America behind the NFL; This year’s Men’s basketball Final Four was the most watched since 2017; and women’s basketball has experienced an exponential growth in popularity in recent years due to stars such as Angel Reese, Caitlin Clark, and JuJu Watkins.

The point is, is that the so-called “wild west” environment that is often used to describe college sports in this Committee is an unfair characterization.

For too long, college sports prioritized some antiquated definition of amateurism that provided cover to allow the billions of dollars created by the labor of college athletes to flow to coaches, athletic departments, conferences, and the NCAA. Just about everyone was getting paid EXCEPT for those whose efforts created all these streams of revenue: the players, primarily Black and Brown young people.

So, to call this the wild west or the “NIL era” is ridiculous. Let’s call this what it really is: the era of player empowerment.

We should embrace that, not seek to rein it in just because the job of a college athletic director got a little harder.

There may be a role for Congress to play in protecting college athletes and providing clarity in certain areas, but it is incumbent on us to not screw this up by giving undue authority back to the remnants of the previous power structure that exploited athletes for decades by keeping them unpaid and subject to restrictions we would not allow in any other industry.

I look forward to today’s discussion and yield back. Thank you.