

**HEARING BEFORE THE UNITED STATES  
HOUSE ENERGY AND COMMERCE COMMITTEE:  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON COMMERCE, MANUFACTURING AND TRADE**

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

Thursday, June 12, 2025

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**INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND**

Chairman Bilirakis, Vice Chairman Fulcher, Ranking Member Schakowsky and distinguished members of the Subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today. It is truly an honor to speak on an issue I care deeply about—the evolving landscape around College Athletics.

As a former women’s basketball student athlete, I know firsthand the tremendous and invaluable impact of a prominent student-athlete experience. **It is not hyperbole to say that an orange basketball changed the trajectory of my life and professional career.** Thanks to the strong foundation built during my time within the Big South Conference, both as a student–athlete and administrator, I have been able to unite an innate advocacy for optimal student–athlete experiences with servant and transformative leadership. Fifteen years later, I am fortunate to serve as the fourth Commissioner of the Big South Conference. Prior to returning to the Big South Conference, I held leadership roles at the Missouri Valley Conference, National Collegiate Athletics Association (NCAA), Summit League and Winthrop University.

The Big South Conference<sup>1</sup> is comprised of nine (9) member institutions in three (3) continuous states – North Carolina, South Carolina, and Virginia. The Conference sponsors nineteen (19) championship sports providing high-level competitive athletics to nearly 3,400 student-athletes.

## **CURRENT LANDSCAPE AND CONGRESSIONAL ENGAGEMENT**

In the last two years, the NCAA has evolved and adopted warranted enhancements focused on meeting the needs of today's student-athletes such as established Core Guarantees. Despite the positive and impactful changes made thus far, the following areas can only be addressed by the leadership of Congress.

1. **Affirm student-athletes are not employees.** Notwithstanding the often-public perception, student-athletes being deemed employees would be detrimental to the enterprise of college athletics. From the highest revenue generating athletic departments to those that are subsidized by their institutions, this would be disadvantageous to the student-athlete experience.
2. **Provide safe harbor from select liability complaints.** The Big South supports the NCAA in seeking safe harbor from specific litigation. While there is so much change underway, it is imperative the NCAA and its membership can create and regulate rules and regulations to ensure uniformity within college athletics.
3. **Preempt state law.** There are thirty-two states that have active laws or executive orders that related to NIL. This makes it extremely difficult to create a level-playing field state-

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<sup>1</sup> The Big South Conference membership includes Charleston Southern University, Gardner-Webb University, High Point University, Longwood University, Presbyterian College, Radford University, UNC Asheville, USC Upstate and Winthrop University.

by-state. Moreover, the current patchwork of state laws places an enormous burden on student-athletes when making college decisions.

As stated in Chairman Bilirakis' Opening Statement of the March 4, 2025 Moving the Goalposts: How NIL is Reshaping College Athletics hearing, “. . . the absence of a preemptive uniform standard has led to a 'Wild West' environment where, sadly, our student-athletes are put in vulnerable positions where they can easily be exploited by those who do not have their best interests in mind.” As a former student-athlete and current commissioner, I want to emphasize my commitment to protecting our student-athletes.

We appreciate the introduction of the SCORE Act of 2025 and commend its aim to bring federal clarity to NIL frameworks. I look forward to working with the Committee to ensure that schools such as those in the Big South are able to continue to compete and thrive.

I would like to thank you in advance for your visionary leadership and consideration of bipartisan legislation to ensure student-athletes continue winning on and off the field for generations to come. Thank you.