

Congressional Personal Statement of Kaley Mudge
U.S. House of Representatives Energy & Commerce Committee
March 29 2023

Chairwoman McMorris-Rodgers, Ranking member Pallone, Mr. Bilirakis, Ms. Schakowsky, and distinguished members of the Energy & Commerce Committee, thank you for providing me with the opportunity to testify before you on the important topic of “Protecting NIL Rights for College Athletes”.

My name is Kaley Mudge. I am a redshirt junior outfielder on the Florida State University softball team, and I am from Winter Springs, Florida. I am currently majoring in exercise science and will be graduating this spring. My goal is to go to nursing school when my eligibility is finished. I would first like to thank you for the opportunity to be here today. I am so grateful to be able to speak to you about my experiences as a college student-athlete. Florida State has truthfully changed my life in the past four years. I have seen myself grow into the best version of myself as a student, as an athlete, and as a person. I chose Florida State because the moment I stepped on campus, it felt like home. I wanted to find a program and an institution that felt like a community, and I found that at FSU. The professors, coaches, administration, and students have made my four years such a great experience. The culture of the softball program is such a family, and I am blessed to find that in a national championship program. My coaches, athletic trainer, nutritionist, strength coach, and teammates all help me become my best self.

I came into FSU as a partial academic and athletic scholarship recipient. When NIL came into play in 2021, I was very excited for the chance to start earning money to help further pay for my education. My experience with NIL has been a very positive experience. I have gotten the opportunity to learn so much about the professional world as a college student. I’ve been able to learn how to read contracts, how to negotiate deals, and how to earn and save money. I have also been able to learn how to brand myself to make deals and earn money as well. NIL has been extremely helpful to me as an Olympic sport athlete on a partial scholarship because I am able to help pay for my tuition to hopefully come out of college with little debt. One specific deal that I am involved in right now has given me the opportunity to start saving money for nursing school when I am done playing softball. This deal will be very helpful to me since I will be paying full tuition with no scholarships when I go to nursing school.

NIL has served as an effective vehicle for comprehensive life skills education given the multifaceted nature of the issue. This includes financial literacy training, contract review, personal branding, business formation, and responsible social media strategies.

Like many universities across the NCAA, Florida State University has developed a comprehensive NIL education program to provide student-athletes with knowledge, resources and support to navigate the NIL environment. This includes the creation of three separate degree-applicable, NIL-related courses in partnership with the College of Business and the School of Entrepreneurship, support for contract review through the College of Law, co-branding opportunities for student-athletes through use of institutional marks and logos, and

expansion of existing university partnerships to develop new opportunities for student-athletes relative to NIL.

In addition to the support provided by the institution, the collective has provided additional resources in the NIL space, specifically in identifying and securing new NIL opportunities, understanding market value, and facilitating group licensing opportunities for myself and many other student-athletes.

Given that we compete for national championships, it is imperative that we have uniform guidelines and expectations relative to NIL as opposed to the current framework of disparate or non-existent state laws and regulations. These national standards should guarantee student-athletes the ability to pursue NIL opportunities, including international students-athletes, while also ensuring a healthy recruiting environment to promote fairness and equity, along with some measure of transparency to support the long-term sustainability of the NIL marketplace and help student-athletes understand their true market value.

As we celebrate 50 years of Title IX, it is important that we ensure the opportunities for participation and access to higher education, particularly for underrepresented populations, are fostered and ensured. There are many threats through legislation and litigation that would undermine this model.

Throughout college athletics, and in particular at Florida State, student-athletes receive the highest forms of healthcare support, including medical coverage for athletic injuries beyond graduation and exhaustion of eligibility. We continue to expand access to enhanced nutrition and mental health resources, and enjoy degree-completion guarantees and first-class academic support and resources.

These benefits enjoyed by student-athletes across the country would not be possible without legal protections under Title IX and the redistribution of revenue across all sponsored sports. The creation of an employee-employer model would significantly threaten this current dynamic and alter everything we know about how sports outside of football and men's basketball are supported.

NIL has provided me with so many opportunities in the past two years, and it has made my experience even better as a college student-athlete. Thank you again for your time and for the opportunity to be here today.