

Committee on Energy and Commerce
Opening Statement as Prepared for Delivery
of
Subcommittee on Innovation, Data and Commerce Member Debbie Dingell

Innovation, Data, and Commerce Subcommittee Hearing on “NIL Playbook: Proposal to Protect Student Athletes’ Dealmaking Rights”

January 18, 2024

Thank you, Ranking Member Pallone.

I have to begin by cheering, Go Blue! It was great to join the University of Michigan and their athletes last weekend back home in Ann Arbor to celebrate our first college football national championship since 1997.

I also want to thank Ms. Kaitlin “Keke” Tholl, a University of Michigan softball player, for being here with us as a witness to give us her perspective on the intersection between college athletics and NIL. I think this is important, especially as we dive into a conversation on a national NIL framework.

As those from Michigan know, college sports are a big deal, and they are the lifeblood of many communities across our country. As someone who represents a significant college athlete population, at schools big and small, I am committed to crafting meaningful federal legislation that ensures all college athletes are heard, protected, and prioritized.

We are here today to discuss a framework for Name, Image, and Likeness, or NIL, and I’m here to learn. The Chairman’s discussion draft is a start — there are some provisions I like, but frankly, I’m concerned about others, including a ban on employment and the antitrust provisions. We’ll need to continue working through them and add new protections that ensure important safeguards are put in place.

We need to make sure all athletes are treated fairly, female athletes are protected and supported, and the integrity of college sports is be maintained.

I am glad this subcommittee has begun tackling this important task, and I look forward to working with Chairman Bilirakis and other Members of this Committee, including a former college athlete herself – Congresswoman Trahan – on a national standard that both protects and empowers college athletes.

We need to get this right, and we need to prioritize gender equity, health and safety, and – most of all – the athletes.

Thank you, and I am looking forward to the conversation today.

I yield back.