

Committee on Energy and Commerce
Opening Statement as prepared for delivery
of
Full Committee Ranking Member Frank Pallone, Jr.

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

January 18, 2024

When it comes to college athletics and Name, Image, and Likeness, I believe our focus should be on what is best for students. For far too long, college athletes—unlike any other student, faculty member, or coach—were prohibited by the NCAA from profiting from their own name, image, and likeness. Thankfully, that has finally changed, and I have not heard a single good argument for why Congress should erode a college athlete’s newly acquired NIL rights.

Unfortunately, the discussion draft before us today would significantly restrict college athletes' NIL rights and cement the NCAA’s monopolistic control over players.

This Committee should be working to preserve athletes’ NIL rights. We should also work to establish health and safety protections that ensure players are guaranteed coverage for athletic related medical expenses and to provide baseline player health and safety standards. And we should strengthen Title IX protections and uphold college athletes’ first amendment right to organize. Instead, the Republican Committee leadership has chosen to take up a discussion draft that would do more harm for college athletes than good.