

Statement of Chairman Gus Bilirakis
CMT Subcommittee Hearing Titled “Moving the Goalposts: How NIL is Reshaping
College Athletics”
March 4, 2025

Good morning and thank you to our witnesses for being here. I’m really excited to hold this hearing today on the evolving landscape of Name, Image, and Likeness—commonly known as NIL—and its impact on college athletics.

In just a few years, college athletics has fundamentally reshaped the lives of student-athletes who can now benefit from their NIL. Before 2021, athletes were barred from profiting off of their own NIL, but in response to legal challenges and a Supreme Court decision, the NCAA ended those restrictions, finally giving our student-athletes their much-deserved ability to earn compensation for their brand and God given talent.

However, 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. I’ve heard awful stories of student athletes signing deals without having been given full explanations for how their deal would impact their long-term finances and livelihood.

This lack of structure has also allowed NIL collectives, who are often affiliated with universities but operating independently, to turn NIL into a pay-for-play system. Instead of being used for legitimate business opportunities, NIL deals are frequently given out as recruiting inducements, with little transparency or oversight.

I’m also concerned about the transfer portal. All of us want to make sure student athletes have the freedom to make the best collegiate and educational decisions for themselves and for their future...

But this current system is not workable as athletes are entering the portal at an unprecedented rate, sometimes multiple times in their careers with a hope, but not a guarantee, for something better.

I’m sure we have all heard the stories of student athletes being encouraged to transfer schools based on promises of NIL money that never materializes. Others transfer expecting better playing time, only to find themselves in a worse situation. This revolving-door system has

created instability for both athletes and the programs they leave behind, with many student-athletes ending up without a clear academic or athletic path.

We often focus on NIL and the business side of college athletics, but we must remember that these are still student athletes—young men and women who are supposed to be receiving an education that prepares them for a life beyond sports. Yet, too many are making life-altering financial and academic decisions without the proper guidance.

Some are signing NIL deals without understanding tax and legal implications. Others are transferring from school to school without receiving the academic support they need to graduate.

If we are serious about protecting student-athletes, we need to ensure they have the resources and education necessary to navigate this new era successfully.

That's why I'm so glad to have Emily and Anthony with us today. Thank you for sharing your stories as student athletes and how you were able to traverse this complex environment. It gives all student athletes the chance to learn and better themselves.

That brings me to a point I really want to drive home. We are working on this issue, not to put one school over another, even though, and cover your ears, Coach Beamer, I would love to see my Florida Gators hoist that championship trophy again soon...

No, we are doing this for the student athletes, for the young men and women who advance to college so that they can continue playing the sports they love and use that experience to help them succeed throughout their lives.

So, it is crucial we establish a preemptive standard that protects student-athletes but also doesn't endanger the many sports programs that we don't see on ESPN or that bring in billions of dollars.

This is too important of an issue to get wrong, so I look forward to a thoughtful discussion and working toward solutions that support both student-athletes and the long-term future of college sports.

With that, I yield back.