

**Chairman Brett Guthrie**  
**Opening Statement—Subcommittee on Commerce, Manufacturing,  
and Trade**  
**“Winning Off the Field: Legislative Proposal to Stabilize NIL and  
College Athletics”**  
**June 12, 2025**  
*As prepared for delivery*

Thank you, Chairman Bilirakis.

Good morning and thank you to our witnesses as well for joining today’s hearing on the ever-evolving landscape of Name, Image, and Likeness in college athletics.

Before we dive in, I have to say, after watching the Republicans *win* the Congressional Baseball Game last night, I think a few of our players might want to start exploring their own NIL opportunities. I’d love to see what kind of NIL deal Mr. Pfluger could get after his diving stop at third and being named the Republican MVP.

I look forward to a thought-provoking discussion on ways Congress, and more specifically, this Committee, can help stabilize the current system.

This subcommittee has been deeply engaged on this issue. Just this year, we’ve had numerous hearings and roundtables with student-athletes, coaches, athletic directors, Conference leaders, and the NCAA. The work has culminated in a discussion draft, the SCORE Act, a legislative proposal to bring stability and clarity to the NIL arena.

Last week, the approval of the *House* litigation settlement marked a historic shift in college athletics. Since the NCAA changed their NIL rules in 2021, the NIL ecosystem has operated without meaningful guardrails. The settlement provides long overdue relief to thousands of student-athletes and allows schools to share a percentage of revenue with their student-athletes.

While the settlement addresses key issues within collegiate athletics, it also raises complex legal, operational, and policy questions, especially in the absence of consistent federal standards for a fundamentally interstate system. That's precisely why we're here today: to create a sustainable, federal structure that preserves the integrity of college sports programs.

Right now, more than 30 states have enacted NIL laws, creating a fragmented and uneven playing field. The SCORE Act, working in conjunction with the settlement, will help to level this playing field and provide more consistency nationwide.

We have also seen how the lack of enforceable rules around athlete eligibility and transferring between schools has intensified recruiting battles and led to a surge in student-athletes entering the transfer portal, not to mention the challenges posed by the added layer of student-athlete agents. This instability raises serious concerns about competitive balance, academic integrity, and the sustainability of college athletics programs nationwide.

Our proposal would provide authority and liability protection to the entities creating and enforcing such rules. We are working closely with our colleagues on the Judiciary Committee to refine this language.

Lastly, the SCORE Act ensures that student-athletes may not be considered employees of their institution. Such a classification could put significant financial strain on college athletic departments, lead to program cuts, and ultimately fewer opportunities for student-athletes. I look forward to continuing to work with the Education and Workforce Committee on these important issues. We've also been in close contact with the Chairman of the Senate Commerce Committee, who has shown a strong interest in creating a durable and balanced framework for college athletics. I appreciate his engagement and look forward to continuing that discussion to get this across the finish line.

As members of this Committee, we have an important responsibility to ensure that college athletics can thrive in a new era. Today, we will take a step in that direction by discussing draft legislation designed to create a unified framework to ensure fair treatment for student-athletes while preserving the integrity and viability of college sports programs.

Energy and Commerce has always led the way to tackle the big issues affecting interstate commerce in a serious way. I look forward to continuing to work with my colleagues across the aisle to make this a bipartisan bill.

Before I yield back, I want to thank my good friend, Chairman Bilirakis, for his diligent work over many years to help us come up with solutions for NIL. Your leadership and commitment to student-athletes has been essential to getting us here today. You know as well as I do that college sports are an important American institution, and I'm glad that you are willing to take the lead on making sure we get this right.