

Dear Chair Cantwell, Ranking Member Wicker, and members of the Senate Commerce Committee,

My name is Dallas Hobbs I am currently a member of the Washington State University football team. I recently graduated with a degree in Digital Technology & Culture, as well as a degree in Fine Arts. I am looking to pursue a master's in Business Administration while playing my two remaining years. Here at WSU, I have been able to be a part of many student-athlete leadership groups. I am the co-founder of the Black Student-Athlete Association (BSAA), a Football Representative, and an Executive Board member on the Pac-12 Student-Athlete Advisory Committee (SAAC). I am also the WSU representative for the Pac-12 Student-Athlete Leadership Team (SALT) and a Pac-12 representative for the NCAA DI Football Student-Athlete Connection Group (SACG). This last summer I was also a leader and a part of the We Are United group that consisted of about 500 Pac-12 football players who were fighting for broad-based reforms in college athletics. These included rights and freedoms related to athlete compensation for use of our name, image, and likeness (NIL), health & safety, and a variety of other meaningful issues.

The push for NIL and other reforms is needed. I am in a state that doesn't have a NIL law so athletes like myself and others in Washington will be without the same freedoms that athletes in NIL states have. This is happening all around the country, beginning July 1st a variety of states will have an athlete that is ahead of others. This will create a major divide in college athletics and changing the experiences of the student-athletes. Congress needs to create and pass a bill that would allow all student-athletes to obtain NIL freedoms.

Securing NIL freedoms for every state would help increase student-athletes experiences. NIL freedoms would create a variety of different ways student-athletes could be more successful, increase value for themselves and their sports, give back, showcase their hobbies, and benefit in other ways. We would see a new side of athletes that would be so amazing and eye-opening. It would show that there is a lot more to an athlete than we normally see. Expressing and learning new skills would create so much positive change in student-athletes lives, as well as others. Younger athletes that look up to college athletes would see that you could be successful in a variety of skills and/or hobbies outside of athletics. They would see college athletes who are artists, musicians, designers, community leaders, and technology experts. We would see an even bigger impact on the next generation of athletes.

Many athletes would be very appreciative of their new freedoms. I am a multimedia artist, content creator, podcaster, and owner of multiple businesses. The issue is I can't promote my ventures in the same way everyone else in those areas can because I am a college athlete. For the last 4 years, I have been restricted and held back from professional growth in my fields. The NCAA says it wants us to be treated like the college students around us, but NCAA rules restrict us from having the same freedoms as our peers. We're restricted or prohibited from promotional activity, from participating with various partners or making certain investments, and many other things that a normal student can do. This seriously harms our growth and experiences as individuals, professionals, and students because we lack the full freedoms everyone else has.

As I had mentioned earlier, I helped lead about 500 Pac-12 FB players to demand fair treatment before last season. NIL freedoms were among those demands but so were other vital issues like bringing forth the enforcement of health and safety standards. We were not able to do much about health and safety standards using our platforms, but we were able to shed a very big light on the lack of enforcement. Currently, there are no standards enforced to ensure college athletic programs are not putting athletes in harm's way. This lack of enforcement has created a lot of issues for many athletes around the country.

This summer, as a part of the We Are United players movement, I was able to hear so many stories of athlete mistreatment around the country throughout various conferences and across both men's and women's sports. Before that summer, I had no clue that so many have had experiences that compromise their health and safety. Hearing these stories personally was eye-opening and concerned me because I only heard from only a fraction of the college athletes in the country. To this day it is the reason I will continue to fight for the athletes I have heard from and the athletes that don't have a voice or platform to speak from. It hurts to know that so many athletes are struggling and have been mistreated. From the outside looking in everything looks like it is going great but there is a critical issue that is ruining and harming college athletes' experiences and bodies. The enforcement of health and safety is one of the biggest things I am fighting for now and every day I have to hear new experiences that will push me harder to see that change comes soon. A lot of college athletes have been hurting for a while but now we are finally getting platforms and allies to help push our voices out there. Change and reform are needed. We need strict enforcement of health and safety standards to ensure all athletes will have a safer experience than those before them.

In addition, I would like to express a few of the major stories that are already out there and involving health and safety standards. My teammate, Tyler Hilinski's death and the discovery that he had chronic traumatic encephalopathy (CTE) - is a reminder of the risk college athletes face in football and other contact sports. CTE has caused reduced cognitive function, depression, impulse control, and has been implicated in numerous suicides. Washington State is not to blame for Tyler's death but it sheds light on the issues of traumatic brain injury and what can happen from them. The NFL has stated plainly that CTE is linked to football and studies show that is associated with traumatic brain injury.

Stories like this show that we need to be very aware and take major precautions for any instances where their major collisions, hits to the head, and concussions. We need to make sure that doctors and athletic trainers cannot be retaliated against for making a medical decision that's in college athletes' best interest. Several surveys from the National Athletic Trainers Association show trainers are often pressured by coaches to return players with concussions to the same game. The NCAA has been clear that it will not punish a coach for doing so. Another issue we see, players in the PAC-12 and across the nation have been hospitalized with life-threatening conditions like heart illness and rhabdomyolysis due to hazardous workout conditions. We all read headlines about the tragic heat illness death of Maryland FB player Jordan McNair and still, nothing has been done. As I had said earlier, I have heard so many stories of athletes going through traumatic experiences, but they had nowhere to go to share these experiences. I wish I could talk about a lot of them because they would shed light on so many issues happening in

college athletics around health and safety. Athletes are scared to share what they are going through because they believe they will face repercussions or more harm from those above them. This is why we need the enforcement of health and safety standards to help stop these traumatic experiences. No athlete should have to go through experiences that have them scared enough that they won't share. Athletes deserve better and we need to see better as soon as we can. I believe if Congress doesn't address it, many more college athletes will needlessly develop traumatic brain injury and CTE, endure sexual abuse, and die from hazardous conditions.

Furthermore, the conferences are now moving toward a playoff system that will add games. USA Today says it could lead to over \$2 billion in new revenue but will increase injuries for us football players. I believe this is an amazing opportunity for all of football and every athlete wants to experience this growth. But this will make the enforcement of health and safety standards that much more important. The NCAA has made clear that it won't enforce health and safety standards. Pac-12 Commissioner Larry Scott claimed that the PAC-12 was incapable of enforcing health and safety standards in a meeting with me and other Pac-12 football leaders of the We Are United Players Movement.

I've had multiple injuries as well surgeries and I am grateful that WSU is paying for all my medical expenses. But this isn't the case for all athletes, NCAA rules allow schools to stick players with their sports-related medical bills. I have also heard of many players across the country that have been mistreated and misdiagnosed on injuries that have cost them time or even their careers. Congress should make sure players don't have to pay for sports-related medical expenses as well as creating some system that would allow for a better second opinion without cost.

I believe that it is also very important to make sure Congress corrects the NCAA's discriminatory treatment against women as was exposed in the NCAA's basketball, softball, and sand volleyball tournaments.

I've been encouraged to see many lawmakers and the media criticize the NCAA for its inaction while athletes are abused and killed in hazardous workouts. What would it say if Congress does the same? If Congress does the NCAA's bidding by passing a narrow NIL bill driven mainly by concerns of recruiting advances and disadvantages, it will become complicit in the physical and mental harm so many athletes endure in NCAA sports. It will signal its approval of the discriminatory treatment of female athletes nationwide. On behalf of so many college athletes that have never truly had a voice in their own well-being, I'm imploring members of this committee to do the right thing and address these key issues along with NIL freedoms by July 1st.



Dallas Hobbs