



Testimony on Senate Bill 474
Senate Commerce Committee
March 4, 2020
Gene Taylor, Director of Athletics, K-State Athletics
Kansas State University

Madame Chair and Members of the Senate Commerce Committee,

My name is Gene Taylor and I am the Director of Athletics at Kansas State University. Thank you for allowing me to testify today and share some of my opinions and firsthand knowledge on the proposed Name, Image and Likeness (NIL) legislation, as well as represent the student-athletes of K-State.

For 36 years, I have worked in college athletics. I have seen the NCAA change and add new policy many times. This is one of the most pivotal times I have witnessed, and it is important that we get this right. At Kansas State, we encourage our athletes to focus on their academics and get their degrees in the college of their choice, compete at the highest level of Division I Athletics, build a positive brand, and to promote and create an image in their time at K-State that will provide them with opportunities in the future.

College athletes are on a bigger stage now than they have ever been before. With that, comes new demands which we must consider. NIL is the newest of these demands. It is a topic that is hard for us to navigate and one we must make certain is well-regulated with the best interest of our student athletes in mind while ensuring we protect the collegiate model we have today which has no parallel in the world. We are not the NFL, NBA or Major League Baseball where well-organized drafts determine the participants. Our participants choose the institution they want to compete for. Recruitment, especially at the Division I level, is highly competitive and highly regulated. To replace or significantly amend the current benefits systems in place, we must be able to move ahead with assurance that recruitment can exist and that integrity can be maintained and enhanced. There are many positive concepts in this bill that I believe could benefit college athletes and others that I have concerns with.

Today's student athletes have benefits that did not exist five or ten years ago. Many of us have seen and enjoyed the tremendous investment in athletic facilities on our campuses and campuses across the country. The opportunity to train and compete in these facilities are tremendous for our men and women. We have made investments in many areas including academic facilities, academic support systems, medical care, which includes transitional healthcare so that medical expenses for injuries that linger on after graduation or departure from school can be reimbursed, and we can now provide unlimited meals and snacks. One of the best decisions we have made was to provide up to full cost of attendance in addition to tuition, fees, room and board and books for full scholarship athletes. This



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change has provided for trips home, entertainment, and incidental living expenses that amounts to between \$3,000 and \$6,000 per student per year depending on the institution. At Kansas State for example, an athlete on full scholarship with in-state tuition, when you factor in all areas (tuition, fees, room, board, books, and cost of attendance) and include support in areas like strength and conditioning, academic tutoring and advising, sports medicine, equipment and apparel, food service and nutrition, and travel, it is valued at \$75,000 per year and out-of-state costs are \$91,000 per year. We need to not lose site of the benefits and great experience our student athletes are receiving. Our number one priority is to make sure we are helping our athletes get an education to build a better future and provide as many opportunities for increased benefits. This would be possible with legislation such as Senate Bill 474 but, we must make sure we have guardrails to protect the collegiate model.

Student athletes are presented with unique opportunities during their college career that other students do not get a chance to experience such as competing for and winning conference and national championships, being recognized for their athletic and academic accomplishments, and by earning All-Conference and All-American honors. As athletic administrators, we must make sure not to put unnecessary pressure on our athletes. Our student athletes have strong bonds with each other and their coaches that will last a lifetime. Our athletes are young men and women who have barely started to tap into their full potential. It is important they share these experiences together to get the most out of their time at Kansas State. The collegiate model is one which values the athlete and puts their future in our hands.

Will collegiate athletics survive with the passage of legislation by states regarding the athletes' ability to receive compensation from their name, image, and likeness – of course. More than likely, the balance of competition will not be altered dramatically. There have always been advantages that institutions have over others and there always will be. The changes being advocated in Senate Bill 474 and in other state legislatures across the country will benefit a very small percentage of the 450,000 student athletes in all divisions in our country. While there are many good points in this bill, there are some areas of concern that are not addressed. For decades, we have funded broad-based sports programs, including our institution's Title IX initiatives on the revenue from a few sports. Title IX is critical to maintain because of the many opportunities it creates. There are many student athletes in a wide array of sports that work just as hard and strive for the same excellence as the more visible sports like football and basketball. The other area of concern is allowing outside third parties to be a part of the NIL process such as agents and/or advisors. There is plenty of work to be done on this issue, but we need to consider all areas and be thoughtful in our collaboration.

There has never been a better time to be a college athlete. As I mentioned earlier, if you are a full scholarship athlete, you are more advantaged than ever before. These are the athletes that are most likely to benefit from NIL. College sports is not a vocation and our participants are not employees. More than 95% of collegiate athletes will not compete in high-level organized sports beyond their four years of college participation. Their active sports careers will be over, but the education they earned, the lifetime friendships they gained, and the experiences they will treasure will pay dividends for years to come. The world of college athletics is changing rapidly and while we have made changes to benefit our athletes, we must continue to look at more of those opportunities to enhance their experience.

However, we need some time to continue the discussion within the industry of college athletics. Our timeline is to have legislation to vote on by January. Allow the Institutions, the Conferences, Athletic Administrators, Presidents and Chancellors, who work in this area everyday and understand the complexities of it all, to come up with the proper way to address the NIL challenge that does not harm the American collegiate model that we all know and love.

Thank you for your time and attention on this very important matter.