



Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation

Field of Streams: The New Channel Guide for Sports Fans

David M. Proper, Senior Executive Vice President of Media & International Strategy

National Hockey League

Tuesday, May 6, 2025

Chairman Cruz, Ranking Member Cantwell, and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to appear before the Committee today on behalf of the National Hockey League. We appreciate your leadership in examining the evolving sports media landscape and its impact on fans, leagues, teams, media companies, and communities across the country.

The NHL is a 107-year-old League with deep roots in North American communities and a strong global presence. In the last few years alone, we have seen record attendance, increased viewership, and substantial growth in youth participation. While we are incredibly proud of this momentum, we are also focused on the continuing responsibility to ensure our games are available to our fans in a manner that fulfills their sports viewing preferences.

At the core of our media strategy is a simple idea: meet fans where they are. In the United States, our national media partnerships allow us to deliver NHL games across a wide array of channels and formats. Live games air nationally on ESPN, ABC, TNT, TBS and NHL Network and top streaming platforms including ESPN+, Hulu, and Max. Whether on a traditional cable or satellite box, a mobile device, or a smart TV, fans in the United States can access live hockey in more ways than ever before.

We are also committed to keeping fans connected to their hometown teams. NHL games continue to be shown regionally through local media partners. While the traditional RSN model has faced recent disruption, we are actively working to support our teams and their partners to respond to changes in the evolving media landscape. Such responses include restructuring existing, often long-standing, RSN arrangements, entering into regional agreements with broadcast affiliates, and/or launching digital direct to consumer products, both on a subscription-fee basis and on a free-to-the-consumer ad-supported basis.

The market, however, is clearly in a state of flux. Every player in this ecosystem — leagues, teams, distributors, and platforms — is working to identify the best ways to serve fans in a rapidly changing environment. We believe it is important to allow the market to settle and stabilize so that long-term, sustainable solutions can emerge. As our business continues to grow and expand, our ultimate goal remains the same: to ensure that NHL content remains accessible and affordable for fans.

But the fan viewing experience is about more than just platforms — it's also about production and content. In that vein, we are embracing media innovations, including non-traditional broadcast formats serving specific demographic groups, such as animated game broadcasts for children, data-casts for avid stat-focused fans, and American Sign Language game productions for our hearing-impaired fans; real-time data overlays, non-game programming content, and personalized viewing options — all of which help us reach broader audiences.

We are committed to serving the full spectrum of our audience — whether it is a child watching their first Stanley Cup Final, a lifelong fan catching a game on their phone during a commute, or a member of the United States military stationed overseas looking for a taste of home. We want the game to be easy to find, easy to follow, and easily available.

At the same time, we understand that the way fans access our game continues to evolve and vary widely. Some rely on traditional broadcast systems, while others are embracing new digital platforms. As the media landscape continues to change, we remain focused on ensuring that our content is as accessible and engaging as possible for all fans—wherever and however they choose to watch.

For us, this is not just a media strategy — serving our fans is a mission shared by the entire League. After 107 years, the NHL is proud to be evolving and proud to be building a future where hockey reaches more people in more meaningful ways than ever before.

Thank you again for the opportunity to appear before you. I look forward to your questions.