



June 10, 2026

The Honorable Ted Cruz
U.S. Senate Commerce Committee Chairman
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Maria Cantwell
U.S. Senate Commerce Committee Ranking Member
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Chairman Cruz and Ranking Member Cantwell,

I and the head coaches listed below want to begin by thanking you for your leadership and your willingness to engage in one of the most important issues facing college athletics today. For the first time in several years, it feels like there is real momentum toward creating structure and a pathway to success in college athletics via the bipartisan introduction of the Protect College Sports Act.

As someone who has spent multiple days in Washington, D.C., meeting with numerous Senators and Members of Congress from both parties to discuss these challenges, I am encouraged by the progress being made and grateful for the Committee's commitment to finding solutions.

My purpose in coming to Washington was simple: to express the urgency of getting something done. After four years of uncertainty, lawsuits, constant rule changes, and unintended consequences, college athletics needs leadership. I am excited that meaningful discussions are finally taking place and that Congress is working toward a path forward.

While much of the public conversation focuses on financial issues, our greatest concerns are centered on the student-athletes themselves. Throughout our careers, we have always believed that our responsibility is to protect young people, help them grow, and prepare them for success long after their playing careers are over.

The first issue we hope the Committee will address is fairness for student-athletes. We are talking about young men and women who are often 17, 18, and 19 years old and making life-changing decisions. Any long-term solution should include thoughtful discussion regarding age and eligibility standards. We have an obligation to protect opportunities for young student-athletes while maintaining a fair and consistent system for everyone involved. We support an age-based eligibility model in which a student-athlete's five-year eligibility window begins upon initial full-time enrollment in college or at the beginning of the academic year following their 19th birthday, whichever occurs first. Such a model would allow for young high school graduates to take a gap year in preparation for college.

The second issue involves the transfer process. We have always believed that coaches should be transformational leaders and mentors. Student-athletes should have opportunities and freedom, but we also need a system that promotes development, accountability, and progress toward academic success.

A student-athlete who transfers for the first time should be immediately eligible to compete. Likewise, if the coach who recruited them leaves for another position or is dismissed, that student-athlete should be able to transfer and retain immediate eligibility. Young people should not be penalized when the circumstances surrounding their original decision fundamentally change. If a student-athlete chooses to transfer more than once, they should not be eligible to compete during the next season; however they should be able to practice and earn revenue share, NIL opportunities and other benefits the same as participating student-athletes.

Third, and perhaps most importantly, we must remember that approximately 99 percent of college athletes will never play professional sports. College athletics must continue to be centered on education. Any legislation should encourage academic progress, degree completion, and preparation for life after sports. We have an opportunity to create policies that help student-athletes leave college with more than athletic memories; we can help them leave with a degree, a purpose, and a future.

We also encourage the Committee to carefully examine the recruitment of international athletes. Their pathway into college athletics is often very different from that of an American high school student. Different developmental systems, competition structures, and eligibility circumstances create challenges that deserve clear and consistent rules.

Specifically, any international player who enrolls in a collegiate program no later than the academic year following their 19th birthday should be subject to the same pre-enrollment certification process and academic requirements as their American counterparts under the proposed age-based eligibility legislation. These student-athletes should receive the same five-year window of competitive eligibility afforded to American players.

For international players who seek enrollment after that threshold, however, a different standard should apply. Their pre-enrollment history should be evaluated through the lens of professional participation, and any determination that the athlete competed at a professional level during that period could result in a corresponding loss of eligibility.

This framework ensures that international recruits are neither unfairly advantaged nor disadvantaged relative to their American peers, while preserving the integrity of the eligibility system for all student-athletes.

These three areas — protecting young athletes, creating sensible transfer and eligibility rules, and preserving the educational mission of college sports — are the issues we believe are most important. We will leave the broadcasting rights, financial framework, and compensation questions to those tasked with finding a fair solution. Our focus is making sure we get the student-athlete experience right.

I was encouraged to hear that Chairman Cruz reached out to SEC Commissioner Greg Sankey and others within college athletics to assist in these conversations. The best solutions will come when policymakers and relevant stakeholders collaborate to address the challenges facing our game.

Thank you again for your leadership and your willingness to tackle these difficult issues. I traveled to Washington to express the urgency of action, and we coaches look forward to returning to help in any way we can. College athletics has changed countless lives, including the lives of so many young people we have had the privilege to coach. We have an opportunity to strengthen it for future generations, and are hopeful that together we can get this done.

Respectfully,

John Calipari
Past President, National Association of Basketball Coaches
Head Men's Basketball Coach, University of Arkansas

Supporting Signatories

Tommy Amaker
President, National Association of Basketball Coaches
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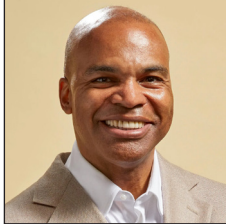
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Co-Signers



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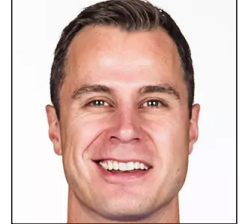
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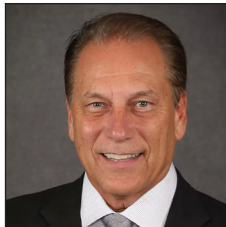
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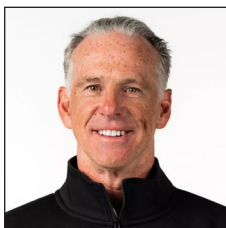
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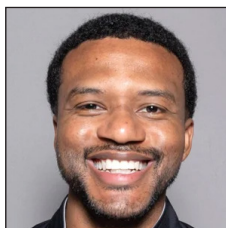
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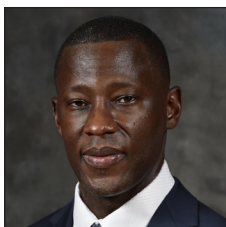
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