



**MID-EASTERN
ATHLETIC CONFERENCE**

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June 15, 2026

The Honorable Ted Cruz, Chairman, Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation

The Honorable Maria Cantwell, Ranking Member, Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation

The Honorable Eric Schmitt, United States Senate

The Honorable Christopher Coons, United States Senate

Dear Chairman Cruz, Ranking Member Cantwell, Senator Schmitt, and Senator Coons:

On behalf of the Mid-Eastern Athletic Conference (MEAC) and our eight member institutions, I write in support of the framework of the Protect College Sports Act of 2026 and to commend your bipartisan leadership in restoring stability to college athletics. We are ready to support this legislation and respectfully ask that it be strengthened in the ways described below.

In that same spirit, the MEAC recognizes and commends the Congressional Black Caucus for its leadership in pursuing fair redistricting across the southern states, so that African American voters have a full and equal opportunity to elect the candidates of their choice. Protecting opportunity — in the classroom, in competition, and at the ballot box — reflects the very mission our institutions were built to serve.

Two provisions are of paramount importance to our institutions. First, the Act should affirmatively clarify that student-athletes are not employees. Section 122 is currently neutral on this question, leaving it to the courts and the NLRB; employee status would compel HBCUs and similarly situated institutions to eliminate women's and Olympic sports to meet the payroll demands of football and basketball. Second, the protections for women's and Olympic sports in Sections 105 and 203 should reach all of Division I rather than only schools that opt into pooled media rights — ideally through a uniform requirement that every Division I institution sponsor a set number of teams, such as 14 or 16.

We also urge closer alignment with the House settlement. The bill should clarify that direct institution-to-athlete revenue-sharing payments need not run through the fair-market-value or valid-business-purpose analysis, and that third-party payments fall outside the revenue-share cap (Sections 114–115). The anti-circumvention language should be narrowed so it reaches genuine cap-evasion and pay-for-play without restricting legitimate participation in revenue sharing, and the prize-money provision should be conformed to the bill’s other compensation rules so that current student-athletes cannot earn significant prize money through that channel (Sections 101 and 114).

To make enforcement workable, the preemption provision in Section 121 should expressly preempt state laws that prevent the reporting, investigation, and penalizing of infractions, and the applicability provision in Section 123 should reach any action pending on or commenced after enactment, including claims based on pre-existing eligibility rules. The private right of action in Section 119 should be significantly narrowed or, in the alternative, confined to exclusive federal-court jurisdiction; as you have yourselves noted, empowering thousands of state and federal judges would invite only more chaos.

Finally, several refinements would better serve student-athletes and institutions alike: replacing the narrow terms “CTE” and “cognitive impairment” in Sections 106–107 with the medically accurate term “repetitive head trauma”; eliminating or qualifying the Section 111 independence requirement so that only a set percentage of athlete representatives must not have worked for institutions, conferences, or associations; and permitting the NCAA to set sport-specific transfer windows as schedules change rather than fixing them in statute (Section 112).

These refinements are offered in the spirit of partnership. The MEAC stands ready to work with you and your staff to strengthen this legislation. Thank you for your leadership and your consideration.

With highest respect and best wishes,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sonja Stills". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Sonja O. Stills
Commissioner
Mid-Eastern Athletic Conference