

June 5, 2026

The Honorable Ted Budd
United States Senate
354 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Budd:

On behalf of Appalachian State University, East Carolina University, North Carolina State University, the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, and the University of North Carolina at Charlotte—the Football Bowl Subdivision (FBS) institutions of the UNC System—we write to express our appreciation for Senators Cruz and Cantwell for their bipartisan leadership in advancing the Protect College Sports Act of 2026. We respectfully encourage your legislative engagement to address the uncertainties of intercollegiate athletics.

College athletics is undergoing a period of rapid and unprecedented change. The expansion of name, image, and likeness (NIL) opportunities, evolving transfer policies, and ongoing legal challenges have created a fragmented and uncertain landscape for student-athletes and institutions alike. A thoughtful federal framework is essential to bring stability, fairness, and long-term sustainability to college athletics.

While there are details still to be debated and agreed upon, the Protect College Sports Act of 2026 represents a significant step forward by establishing a national standard to govern athletics. The legislation aims to protect student-athletes by preserving NIL opportunities while strengthening transparency, agent oversight, health and academic protections, and institutional accountability. By replacing the current patchwork of state-based NIL regulations with a consistent federal approach, the Act promotes fairness across institutions and helps ensure that competitive outcomes are not determined by geography or disparate state policies.

For North Carolina, intercollegiate athletics is both an educational and economic driver that supports student success, workforce development, and community impact. We are committed to maintaining athletic programs that are competitive and firmly grounded in our educational missions. Federal legislation that reflects these values is critical not only for our institutions, but for the future of college athletics nationwide.

Thank you for your leadership and for your continued support of higher education in North Carolina. We appreciate your consideration and stand ready to serve as resources as you evaluate its impact on our state's students and institutions.

Sincerely,

Signed by:

Heather Norris

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Heather H. Norris

Chancellor

Appalachian State University

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