



**Testimony of Pete Bevacqua  
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University of Notre Dame**

**Before the U.S. Senate Commerce Committee  
June 3, 2026**

Thank you, Chairman Cruz, Ranking Member Cantwell, and distinguished Members of the Committee.

I am honored to have this opportunity to represent the University of Notre Dame, our student-athletes, coaches, staff and our alumni around the world. Without their hard work, support and generosity for our University, we could not work each day to uphold the vision of our founder, Father Edward Sorin, for Notre Dame to serve as “one of the most powerful means of doing good in this country.”

We bring this vision to life by investing deeply in the holistic success of our students in the classroom, on the field and beyond. From our Pathways program, which ensures all undergraduate admissions applications are reviewed need-blind and the University meets 100% of every potential student’s demonstrated financial need without loans, to our athletic department’s goal to ensure that all of our student-athletes have an experience that combines academics, athletics and student life so they are equipped to be active and positive members of society well beyond their years on campus.

The topic at hand today is one fraught with complexities and urgency. I would like to thank the leadership of this committee, Chairman Cruz and Ranking Member Cantwell, for their continued and tireless leadership and to many of their colleagues in this Committee and the larger Senate for understanding the existential crisis facing college athletics and for their bipartisan commitment to advancing critical legislation. Ours is an educational initiative in crisis with schools decreasing opportunities for student-athletes, bad-faith actors with predatory practices harming both student-athletes and institutions and the inability for common sense rules to be set and followed without risk of endless litigation. It is imperative that Congress takes action imminently. The bipartisan Protect College Sports Act of 2026, led by Chairman Cruz, Ranking Member Cantwell, Senator Coons and Senator Schmitt, works to capture the critical components necessary to protect student-athletes, provides guardrails for the collegiate athletics system and codifies NIL agreements.

At Notre Dame, we already uphold many elements of the proposed legislation in connection with the comprehensive health, safety, financial and academic support we provide to our student-athletes. We hope all student-athletes, not just those educated in South Bend, Indiana, have access to similar support measures and that academics remain a central part of their collegiate experience.

The efforts you have made to restore sanity to the transfer portal and eligibility rules, protect the scholarships of student-athletes, ensure medical insurance is commonplace for these students, remove “bad actors” from college athletics and reform SPARTA represent just a few of the many concepts outlined in this bill that are necessary for the future of college athletics. We applaud your efforts in regard to these important matters as they relate to all student-athletes, regardless of their sport or the revenue their sport might earn, and their fans throughout our nation and, quite frankly, the world.

I want to outline three key measures and respectfully ask that you consider them as you embark on advancing this critical legislation:

1. Preserving the Student-Athlete Experience
2. Continued Growth and Sustained Health for Women’s and Olympic Sports
3. “4 For Forever”

## **PRESERVING THE STUDENT-ATHLETE EXPERIENCE**

We strive to provide an unmatched student-athlete experience for every student-athlete that attends Notre Dame. The four years (or more) that student-athletes have on our campuses across the country must be used to pursue their education, obtain a degree, create meaningful, and lasting relationships and prepare themselves for the rest of their lives. We all must agree that such actions are the true essence of their college experience. Unfortunately, those key elements are being lost and/or minimized throughout the country.

Our hope is that our fellow institutions of higher education reaffirm their commitment that student-athletes are students first and foremost and that athletics, while important to the overall growth of our students, cannot replace the importance of being an authentic member of the overall student body. While there is no expectation that other universities follow our exact model, we set a standard for all of our student-athletes — they live on campus, fully integrated with their fellow students in dorms and we only provide and recognize in-person classes, with no online opportunities and mandatory attendance requirements. We have in place a class miss policy governed by our Faculty Board on Athletics to ensure that education stays at the forefront when schedules are created on a sport-by-sport basis. These are just a few non-negotiable components of student-athlete life at Notre Dame that we are preserving in order to maintain an authentic and credible student-athlete experience - one we feel is second to none in college athletics.

What is our north star? It is the preservation of this experience for our student-athletes. We are confident that with your bipartisan support, we can continue to provide it for the foreseeable future.

## **CONTINUED GROWTH AND SUSTAINED HEALTH FOR WOMEN'S AND OLYMPIC SPORTS**

Protecting the incredible value of the student-athlete experience beyond revenue-generating sports, with a particular emphasis on the continued growth and sustained health of our women's and Olympic sports, is central to our mission at Notre Dame. These programs are the bedrock of the collegiate model, providing thousands of young men and women with opportunities to compete at the highest levels while earning a world-class education. If we continue to go down the path of no legislative action, Olympic and women's sports around the United States will be at risk both this year and for years to come.

Congress must ensure that the transition to new models that support NIL agreements with student-athletes does not inadvertently dismantle and/or materially weaken the broad-based athletic opportunities that have made the American collegiate system the envy of the world. At Notre Dame, we remain steadfast in our commitment to the Olympic movement and Title IX, recognizing that the success of these programs is a vital component of our institutional identity.

### **"4 FOR FOREVER"**

Finally, we must address the critical nature of protecting our student-athletes through comprehensive support systems that extend far beyond their time in competition. These efforts include securing scholarship opportunities and roster spots, providing extended medical insurance and offering opportunities for them to achieve financial literacy.

At Notre Dame, we call this commitment "4 for Forever." It is not just a tagline or a motto. "4 For Forever" is something we believe in and execute on behalf of our student-athletes in all 26 of our programs during and after their time on campus. It is our promise — our lifelong commitment to them — that the time student-athletes spend at Notre Dame will prepare them for their futures. Spend four years at Notre Dame as a student-athlete and we'll set you up for the remainder of your life - whether it be career placement, community engagement, life skills, or navigating the pivot from athletics to your next step - our "4 For Forever" promise is there for you. We believe that by codifying these protections, we can ensure that the collegiate model remains a sustainable and transformative force for generations to come.

In conclusion, we urge Congress to advance legislation that protects student-athletes, holds those accountable who refuse to follow the agreed upon standards and rules and provides the appropriate governing body the latitude to ensure one of our nation's greatest treasures, college athletics, exists well into the future.