

**BEFORE THE HOUSE FINANCE COMMITTEE**

**REPRESENTATIVE SCOTT OELSLAGER  
CHAIR**

**TESTIMONY  
OF  
BRUCE JOHNSON  
PRESIDENT  
INTER-UNIVERSITY COUNCIL OF OHIO**

**OCTOBER 16, 2019**

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**The Public Universities of Ohio**

The University of Akron  
University of Cincinnati  
Miami University  
Ohio University  
Wright State University

Bowling Green State University  
Cleveland State University  
Northeast Ohio Medical University  
Shawnee State University  
Youngstown State University

Central State University  
Kent State University  
The Ohio State University  
The University of Toledo

Chairman Oelslager, Vice Chair Scherer, Ranking Minority Member Cera and members of the House Finance Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today on behalf of the state's fourteen public universities, all of which are members of the Inter-University Council of Ohio (IUC). My name is Bruce Johnson and I am the President of the IUC.

The IUC was established in 1939 as a voluntary educational association of Ohio's public universities. It is committed to ensuring affordable opportunities for the more than 329,000 students attending our member institutions without sacrificing the quality of their education or experience.

I am testifying today on House Bill 194 as an interested party because Ohio's public universities have no position on the state's prerogative to adopt of legislation to legalize, regulate, and tax sports gaming and sports gaming businesses. However, what Ohio's public universities do have an opinion on is the designation of collegiate athletics as a permitted form of sports gaming in this legislation. The substitute version of the bill (I\_133\_0103-11) currently before the Committee permits wagering on any professional or collegiate sport or athletic event, any motor race event, or any other special event authorized by the State Lottery Commission; on the individual performance statistics of athletes or participants in such an event; or on a combination of those. My testimony will focus solely on that single provision, to which the IUC objects.

We are concerned by the inclusion of collegiate athletics for different reasons, but primarily because of the many regulatory and administrative challenges associated with legalized betting on what are, fundamentally, amateur sports. Most of these challenges are related to maintaining the integrity of the individual student athlete, coaching staff, the integrity and cohesion of the team, and the sport itself. For many years, the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) has had bylaws restricting sports wagering and for good reason. Sports gambling not only threatens the integrity of the game but is also a point of entry into other problematic behaviors. While the NCAA still opposes all forms of legal and illegal sports wagering, which has the potential to undermine the integrity of sports contests and jeopardizes the welfare of student-athletes and the intercollegiate athletics community, it now also takes the position that certain legislative provisions are necessary to provide adequate protections to all those impacted by legalized sports wagering.

If wagering on collegiate athletics is permitted, it would not take a great leap of logic to conclude the risk of student athletes soliciting and accepting payments in order to influence the outcome of games may increase. While we would like to believe that our student athletes are men and women of impeccable integrity, and most are, it would be naïve and irresponsible to simply dismiss or ignore that the temptation to compromise performance or trade on information in exchange for financial gain becomes increasingly real and significant with legalized sports wagering on college athletics. Unfortunately, it is human nature.

In this environment, information now becomes a very valuable commodity. A roommate, friend, or associate may be aware of a publicly undisclosed injury, have access to play designs, or other intelligence that may be of value to someone placing a bet on the outcome of a game and could solicit or accept payment in exchange for that information. In order to avoid those situations and to protect the integrity of the game, sports wagering would likely subject student athletes to heightened invasions of privacy, including publicly releasing injury reports or lists of players who are injured or unavailable for each game.

To guard against the negative affect of sports wagering, universities would need to invest in expanded training and monitoring programs to support our student athletes, coaches, staff, faculty and the broader campus community. Ohio universities would have to create costly comprehensive compliance programs for student athletes, students, boosters, coaches, all personnel associated with gamedays, broadcast partners, medical staff,

the general public, faculty, and staff to deter misconduct relating to sports wagering laws and to monitor these activities.

Permitting collegiate sports gambling in Ohio poses risks of increased incidents of problem gambling. This, in turn, creates excessive and unnecessary threats to the mental and financial well-being of our student populations. Ohio's public universities are already facing a mental health care crisis on campus. Nationally, over one third of counseling centers report having a waitlist for services. The demand for service on campus is overwhelming the ability to serve. Unfortunately, those services come at a significant cost. Adding to that cost is a shortage of workers – including counselors, clinical psychologists, doctors, nurses, and others – on campus that most of our institutions are experiencing. And adding to this cost, yet again, by creating a new pool of potential problem gamblers does not seem like good public policy.

In addition to creating costly regulatory and compliance challenges, we believe that expanding sports wagering on collegiate athletics has the potential to intensify a trend of problem gambling and correlated risky behavior among the age demographic of our student populations -- as many have the resources, proximity, and desire to become involved. According to the "Second Ohio Gambling Survey" released by the Ohio for Responsible Gambling Coalition in 2017, and available on the Ohio Casino Control Commission's website, younger adults, specifically males ages 18-44, are more at-risk for problem gambling.

In 2018, a study entitled "A Meta-analytical Synthesis and Examination of Pathological and Problem Gambling Rates and Associated Moderators Among College Students, 1987-2016" determined that an estimated six percent of college students were found to be pathological gamblers and the proportion of problem gamblers was calculated to be at just over ten percent. Compared to non-gambling counterparts, college students who gamble also have reported higher incidents of other risky behaviors including binge drinking, marijuana use, cigarette use, illicit drug use, and unsafe sex after drinking

Chair Oelslager and members of the committee, for these reasons and on behalf of the 5,916 student athletes that participate in more than 240 sanctioned sports on Ohio's public university campuses, I respectfully request that you amend Substitute House Bill 194 to specifically prohibit collegiate sports gaming or wagering in Ohio. I have attached to my testimony a simple amendment that would accomplish this purpose. I also would note that the current substitute version of the bill adopted by the committee does the same thing for a sport or athletic event for primary or secondary school students that is conducted or sponsored by a primary or secondary school or by another person. We ask for the same consideration.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I am happy to answer any questions the committee may have.