



### **Proponent Testimony on HB 184**

House Workforce and Higher Education Committee

*Tuesday, May 6, 2025*

Chairman Young, Vice Chair Ritter, Ranking Member Brown Piccalotonio, and members of the House Workforce and Higher Education Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of House Bill 184 (HB 184). My name is Ross Bjork, and I am proud to serve as Sr. Vice President and Wolfe Foundation – Eugene Smith Endowed Director of Athletics at The Ohio State University.

First, let me begin by applauding the bill sponsors, Representative Brian Stewart and Ty Mathews, for advancing this legislation to better protect Ohio's student-athletes from entering into NIL contracts that may limit their future earnings once their collegiate eligibility has ended. As the bill sponsors stated in their testimony last week, HB 184 provides timely protections, transparency, and fairness during this time of rapid change facing college athletics.

When I testified before this committee last year on a separate bill that updated Ohio's Collegiate Athlete Law – HB 660 which was eventually amended and included in HB 315 – I discussed the need for state law to provide safeguards for both institutions and student-athletes during this transformational time in college athletics, specifically around use of a student-athlete's use of name, image, and likeness (NIL).

Late last month, the Division I Board of Directors of the NCAA approved changes to the rules that will permit universities to provide additional benefits to student-athletes should the *House vs NCAA Settlement Agreement* ("*House settlement*") be approved. The Board's action will help provide a more uniform ability for participating schools to provide student-athletes direct compensation for use of their NIL. Thanks to the support of Governor DeWine and the Ohio General Assembly, Ohio's law provides the statutory framework that aligns with the *House settlement* and the NCAA's recent action to ensure that our student-athletes are able to maximize their opportunities to financially benefit from use of their NIL.

HB 184 will offer additional protections for student-athletes by prohibiting the use of NIL contracts that extend beyond their eligibility to participate in intercollegiate athletics. We believe it is in the student-athletes' best interest for Ohio law to allow them to financially benefit from use of their NIL, while at the same time protecting use of their NIL rights and future compensation after their college participation has ended.

With its protections for student-athletes, HB 184 is yet another strong example of how Ohio continues to be a leader in the rapidly changing landscape of collegiate athletics. I want to thank Representatives Stewart and Mathews for advancing this commonsense bill, and to the governor and the Ohio General Assembly for the ongoing commitment to ensure our student-athletes are successful both on and off the field.

Once again, thank you for the opportunity to provide support of this bill. And, as always, Go Bucks!