



Proponent Testimony on House Bill 184

Senate Judiciary Committee

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Chairman Manning, Vice Chair Reynolds, Ranking Member Hicks-Hudson, and members of the Senate Judiciary 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 the legislature 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 importance 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).

On June 6, US District Court Judge Claudia Wilken issued a ruling formally approving the *House vs NCAA Settlement Agreement* ("*House settlement*"), marking a pivotal shift in college athletics. As part of the agreement, which has been signed and approved by all parties and will take effect July 1, 2025, schools will now be permitted to directly compensate student-athletes for use of their NIL. In anticipation of this ruling, the NCAA Board of Directors approved changes to the rules that will provide a uniform ability for participating schools to provide student-athletes direct compensation. Finally, thanks to the leadership of Governor DeWine and the Ohio general assembly, Ohio's law already provides the statutory framework to ensure our student-athletes are able to maximize their opportunities to benefit from use of the NIL now that the *House* settlement is approved.

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 another strong example of how Ohio continues to be a national leader in the rapidly changing landscape of collegiate athletics. I want to thank Representatives Stewart and Mathews for advancing this common-sense bill, and to the governor and the members of the Ohio House and Senate for your ongoing commitment to ensure our student-athletes can be successful both on and off the field.

Once again, thank you for the opportunity to provide support of this bill and I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.