



Statement of Support from the Big Ten Student-Athlete Issues Commission (SAIC)

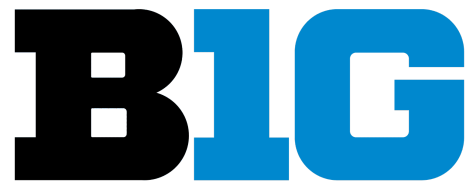
Dear Esteemed members of the Education and Workforce Committee,

My name is Abby Lynch, and I am a former women's soccer and track student-athlete at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign. As Chair of the Big Ten Student-Athlete Issues Commission, I am an advocate and representative for the almost 10,000 Division 1 student-athletes of the Big Ten Conference. The Big Ten Conference stretches nationwide across 14 states, including California, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Maryland, Michigan, Minnesota, Nebraska, New Jersey, Ohio, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Washington, and Wisconsin.

The Student Compensation and Opportunity through Rights and Endorsements Act (SCORE Act) is a necessary and critical step in protecting student-athletes' rights, opportunities, and well-being. I just recently finished up my athletic eligibility, and I am so thankful for the many opportunities that came with being a Division 1 student-athlete. My coaches and staff were so much more than authority figures; they were my role models and my greatest support system through some of my toughest and most developmental years. A student-athlete to coach relationship does not, and should not, function the same way as an employee to employer relationship. The genuine relationships between coaches and players are paramount to the student-athlete experience.

The Big Ten Conference serves as one of the biggest stages for college athletics in this country. I have had the opportunity to play with and compete alongside some of the best athletes in the world. There are hundreds of future Olympians and professional athletes currently competing in the Big Ten. With the rise of NIL and the recent enactment of the House Settlement, many student-athletes in the Big Ten have the opportunity to pursue life-changing financial gain from their athletic abilities and personal brand without designating them as employees.

This conference is also home to some of our country's top academic institutions where we as student-athletes have the opportunity to use athletics to financially support our education and fuel our careers after sport. Fewer than 2% of all Division 1



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student-athletes go on to compete professionally in their sport. The academic opportunity for student-athletes is central to the mission of college athletics, as are the many important life lessons derived from navigating the balance of college academics and athletics. The SCORE Act safeguards all student-athletes, no matter their sport or ability, and aims to foster an environment that promotes their holistic development.

This bill reinforces a fundamental truth: student-athletes are students above all else, NOT employees. The Big Ten Conference strongly supports the provisions that broaden our access to NIL opportunities, agent representation, privacy safeguards, and financial transparency, all while preserving our non-employment status. The SCORE Act also ensures comprehensive medical care, support for degree completion, protection for Olympic sports, and essential health, safety, and educational resources. This bill fosters fairness and establishes consistent standards nationwide, reflecting a modern, student-centered vision for collegiate athletics.

Thank you for your commitment to moving college athletics forward.

Kindest regards,

As the representative of the Big Ten Conference,

Abby Lynch
Big Ten NCAA Division I Representative
Chair of Big Ten Student-Athlete Issues Commission (SAIC)
Former Women's Soccer & Track Athlete
University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign