

**Hearing before the United States Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor,
and Pensions
“Compensating College Athletes: Examining the Potential Impact on Athletes and
Institutions”**

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Testimony of Karen Dennis
Director, Track and Field/Cross Country
The Ohio State University

Chairman Lamar Alexander, Ranking Member Patty Murray and distinguished members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify on the subject of “Compensating College Athletes: Examining the Potential Impact on Athletes and Institutions.” As one who has been engaged in sports over the past six decades as an athlete, coach, and now one of only three percent of women in the country to preside as director of a dual gendered track and field program, I’m honored to be with you today to provide you my insights on this important topic.

My parents were both college educated. My mother was a school teacher, my father a city of Detroit employee. My father was an outstanding high jumper and sprinter who competed against and with the great Jesse Owens.

I fell in love with track and field watching the 1960 Olympics and Wilma Rudolph winning three Olympic gold medals. She became my sports hero because she looked like me, and I thought I was also fast. I didn’t know anything about what it took to become an Olympian. I only knew I was faster than any girl and most of the boys in elementary school.

I entered high school during the pre-Title IX era. A time when sport participation for girls was limited to only basketball in my school. I raced locally, regionally, and ultimately for a state championship. As a member of the Detroit Track Club, I was able to compete throughout the country and internationally. I qualified for the 1968 Olympic trials in the 200m dash hoping to be among the top three to make the team. Unfortunately, I placed 5th, losing my bid for the team.

In 1972, I entered Michigan State University (MSU). I had a daughter and new responsibilities. Completing college became my priority. However, while at MSU, I was encouraged by two prominent coaches (Coach Jim Bibbs, the first minority head coach in the school's history, and Dr. Neil Jackson, the Athletic Director and Women’s Track and Field coach and former Olympian) to try out for the newly formed track team at MSU. I couldn’t resist the opportunity to put my spikes back on. I was the first

woman at Michigan State in track and field to receive an athletic grant in aid -- a whopping \$300!

I graduated Michigan State University with a bachelor's degree and a master's degree. I was the head coach of Michigan State, UNLV, and the 2000 U.S. Women's National Track and Field Team. Currently, I'm in my sixth season as Director of Track & Field and Cross Country at Ohio State.

The Department of Athletics at Ohio State offers 36 intercollegiate sports – 17 women's, 16 men's and three co-ed – and approximately 1,000 student-athletes, nearly two-thirds of whom are Ohio State Scholar-Athletes and nearly one-half who are Academic All-Big Ten honorees. Four Ohio State sports generate revenue: football, men's basketball, men's ice hockey and wrestling. Of those, only two programs – football and men's basketball – actually generate a profit. Revenue sharing from these programs is what makes it possible for programs like mine to exist. Ohio State's Department of Athletics is one of approximately 20 nationwide that is self-sustaining and receives no university funds, tax dollars or student fees.

The track and field program is one of the oldest and most storied at Ohio State. The men's program dates back to 1913 while the women's program started in 1978. Some of the most recognizable names in the sport wore the scarlet and gray, including the incomparable Jesse Owens. The men's program has won one national championship, produced 59 NCAA indoor and outdoor champions and nine Big Ten team titles. The women's teams have been among the best and most consistent programs in the conference and are the winners of back to back indoor team titles (2019 and 2020) and three outdoor championships, most recently in 2019. It has crowned seven NCAA champions (five indoor and two outdoor). Between the two programs, Ohio State has over 400 individual Big Ten champions, 200 first-team All-Americans and countless more student-athletes who have gone on to success in all walks of life.

I've been fortunate to have witnessed and been a benefactor to the many changes in collegiate sports over the past several decades.

- **Increased scholarship opportunities for women.** Collegiate sports in 1972 were two separate entities: one for men and one for women. Men's sports was governed by the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) and women's sports by the Association for Intercollegiate Athletics for Women (AIAW). The disparity between the men and women's programs was blatantly obvious, most notably in travel, housing, equipment, practice times, facilities, coach's pay, and scholarships. The impact of Title IX on women student-athletes cannot be overstated. Today, the number of female student-athletes is at an all-time high.

- **The “Cost of Attendance” component to all student athlete scholarships & budget increase to women sports programs.** In 1972, Title IX was enacted into law, which kick-started progress for women by requiring schools to provide equitable opportunities for both men and women in sports. By the late 1970s budgets were increased for women’s sport programs. Thanks to increased funding and institutional opportunities, there has been a 545% increase in the percentage of women playing college sports since the passage of Title IX and in 2019, more than 10,000 women’s team competed in NCAA-sponsored sports according to the NCAA. It is critical that these existing opportunities for female college athletes and the advancements which have occurred as a result of Title IX are supported and protected.
- **National and international team travel for competitions.** As a young coach, after the passage of Title IX, I advocated for a travel budget that would allow for more competitive opportunities, two athletes to a room instead of four, two pairs of shoes per person, \$20.00 a day per diem, and scholarship numbers equal to some of my Big Ten competitors. I figured I had nothing to lose, everything to gain. Some of my requests were met.

Other significant changes include:

- **Media and television exposure.**
- **Equality for National Championships among all NCAA Division programs.**
- **National and international recruitment.**
- **Upgraded facilities and locker rooms for both men and women’s teams**
- **Medical services, nutritional and psychological services.**
- **Equality consideration of salaries for women.**

Throughout each period in change of governance, the student athlete experience has been significantly enhanced. The driving force of change in this moment is to stay laser-focused on what really matters. As a former student athlete, a young coach, and now in the youth of my old age, the student athlete experience will continue to be what really matters to me.

The current debate to “compensate college athletes” has been discussed among coaches and student athletes for years dating back to my years as a young coach. As states

began to enact laws governing student athlete compensation, I'd like to offer some of my insights on the impact "Pay to Play" and "Name Image and Likeness" (NIL) could have on our students and university sport teams.

I am a strong supporter of the amateurism model of collegiate athletics. Paying players to play – in essence making them employees of their universities – would have serious, negative consequences on college sports and the student athlete. I fear once enrolled, student athletes would prioritize athletic performance to the detriment of their academics. While "paying players to play" sounds simple and easy, the distribution of funds to every student athlete is not. Will all student athletes be paid the same? Would non-scorers and students that don't play, receive the same level of pay as scorers and our teams most relied upon athletes? If so, this approach will take away the competitive incentive to get better by rewarding everyone for unequal participation. Finally, the cost of funding "pay to play" at best would result in smaller squad sizes thereby eliminating competitive opportunities for many students. At worst, it would force many athletic departments to completely eliminate nonrevenue generating sports – such as track and field.

The NIL model will serve a broader base of students through sport and continue to embrace the successful NCAA amateur sport structure. Providing our student athletes the opportunity to monetize their talents through NIL will allow them to grow and use their intellectual and creative talents beyond their athletic abilities. It's exciting to imagine a student population incentivized to experience and discover talents beyond their athletics. Given the opportunity to brand themselves while in college with technical, intellectual, tangible and legal resources at their disposal, a greater number of student athletes will leave school better prepared for life and global citizenship.

At Ohio State for example, we place great emphasis on "life after sport" through the Eugene D. Smith Leadership Institute, which provides leadership, character, and career development opportunities to all student-athletes in order to best prepare them for life after graduation. This is in addition to a national model Student-Athlete Support Services Office (SASSO) that supports the University and Athletic Department missions by providing programs and services that promote degree attainment and comprehensive personal development. SASSO highlights include:

- An academic counselor assigned each team to provide accurate, academic information and planning related to a student's college progress and degree program;
- Priority scheduling;
- Learning specialists and mentors; and
- Study table and tutoring programs.

I do have concerns with NIL. Social media apps are the easiest way for student athletes to gain recognition and make money. Unfortunately, it's the least monitored and regulated. If not properly checked for content, highly inappropriate postings could damage the reputation of the student and have long-lasting impact. While inappropriate content can be identified after the fact, unfortunately that may be too late. Who defines what's appropriate becomes another issue that may require litigation. Living in the world of Covid-19 and social injustice, student athletes run the risk of infringing on a teammate's privacy in their posts.

Social media "following" is a highly competitive business. The amount of money to be made is dependent on the number of "followers." Moreover, immediate financial gratification could become more important than attending classes and school events, and even athletic practices. Also, with some newfound revenue comes new and probably unexpected tax liabilities as well as financial implications that could affect their eligibility for some student aid programs, such as Pell. Finally, young athletes could attract older followers with the financial means to show up at a student's school, residence, hotel or competition. This possibility worries me that our student athletes may be exposed to uncomfortable and possibly dangerous situations. Certain guardrails and education programs must be put into place to appropriately support the student-athletes.

As a minority coach in a minority sport, I know the changes considered in this moment will not only change the lives of our student athletes but will alter the trajectory of their families, communities, and society at large. I've witnessed the value in providing an education through athletic participation to students in nonrevenue sports and underrepresented populations that have been intellectually marginalized. I've watched hundreds of students who would never have gone to college – some who didn't even think they belonged in college – leave school with jobs in careers of their choice.

In the most recent statistics, Ohio State student-athletes combined for a 995 single-year Academic Progress Rate (APR) with 21 teams – 20 of them nonrevenue generating, including men's track and field – posting perfect 1,000 scores. Looking at multi-year scores, 23 teams are at 980 or higher, including women's track and field and men's and women's cross country. According to a 2017 Bureau of Labor Statistics earnings by Educational Attainment as cited in the Commission on Black Girls in Columbus study, people with a Bachelor's degree earn 65 percent more weekly income than those with a high school diploma. The study reflected weekly earnings for H.S graduates is \$712 and college graduates with a B.S. \$1,173. Eliminating economic disparity is liberating!

We cannot ignore the current reality facing universities and their athletic programs. The possibility of nonrevenue sports being cancelled due to lack of funding is

frightening. The effects of Covid-19 has given us a jarring reality check on our athletic community that now threatens our survival. In fact, just last week a Big Ten institution dropped its men's track and field program.

As you craft legislation to increase student opportunities, I ask that you do so with an eye not just toward revenue-generating sports, but also to sports like those I am privileged to coach.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify, and I look forward to answering any questions you may have.

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