

Written Testimony of Cami March (Class of 2022)
Student Athlete, Captain Women's Golf
Washington State University

before the

**Committee on Energy & Commerce, Subcommittee on Consumer Protection and
Commerce**

U.S. House of Representatives
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Introduction.

Chairman Pallone, Ranking Member McMorris Rodgers, Chairwoman Schakowsky and Ranking Member Bilirakis, my name is Cami March. I am a Senior at Washington State University located in Pullman, WA working to complete my Bachelor of Science degree in Digital Technology and Culture in 2022. Thank you for the opportunity to represent my fellow student-athletes at WSU before the House Energy & Commerce Committee Consumer Protection and Commerce Subcommittee today regarding the ability of student athletes to utilize our name image and likeness.

For the past 3 years I have been a golfer here at Washington State University and was awarded the role of team captain this year. I also serve on the executive board of the Washington State Student-Athlete Advisory Committee. In that role, I represent my fellow student athletes in communicating our needs and concerns with the WSU administration. My executive board position as PAC-12 representative requires me to travel once in the fall to meet with the eleven other representatives from their respective schools to discuss conference wide issues.

Beyond the golf course, I explored my entrepreneurial passions and created a social media app that would revolutionize the way people created and coordinated plans with others and found activities to do in their city - dwn. I then began shepherding this creative venture in many of its important facets, including the design and development of the app, in parallel to my collegiate golfing aspirations. dwn came about because I had a desire to spend time with my friends, however, I couldn't figure out what moods people were in, what was out there for us to do/try and finding a time the works for all of us. The result: No plans, frustrated friends, and wasted time. Something needed to be done. dwn is the ultimate aggregator and tailored concierge for addressing and solving all the issues that could arise with finding activities to do with friends or solo.

This parallel track began to manifest challenges that were unique to my status as a collegiate student-athlete. Even prior to my app's development, there were many arduous steps I was required to take to remain compliant with NCAA's regulations. I began to have consistent contact with

Washington State's athletic compliance team to apply for a waiver that allowed me to form the company.

Playing golf and being a part of the Washington State Women's golf team has been one of the best and most fulfilling experiences of my life. Its rigorous, supportive, and competitive environment is why Washington State was such a perfect fit, both on and off the course for me. However, there is more to each student-athlete than just being a student and an athlete and actively participating in social aspects of college life was an integral inspiration for developing the app.

The discussion in Congress around the utilization of a student athlete's Name Image and Likeness has broad impacts on all our student athletes at WSU and across the Pac-12 conference. As a student and an entrepreneur, I would like to highlight my experience as I developed my business along with the assistance and challenges, I have faced while creating my app as a student athlete at WSU.

I. NIL (Name, Image, & Likeness).

Prior to the July 1st date when the NCAA's temporary rule change and several state laws went into effect allowing students to use their Name Image and Likeness, I was unable to promote my app via social media to get some of the same traction that my peers who were creating apps were able to utilize prior to launch. Without the ability to promote my app, I was and still am at a disadvantage compared to my peers. I was not able to utilize the summer months prior to the start of school to do the heavy lifting and posting to support our various launches throughout the year. The ability to be able to promote my app while also remaining a part of my team's social media accounts and posting about my golfing events was my focus. I had already created a huge following with my closest friends and family on all my social media accounts and felt it would be counterproductive to create new accounts.

I applied for a waiver to the NCAA that would grant me the opportunity to post my app on social media while also remaining a part of my women's golf social media and continue to post about my golf endeavors. Unfortunately, I was denied and prior to July 1, 2021, I scrubbed my entire Instagram of all photos that related to WSU, WSU Golf, and my college experience here at WSU. I also had to remove WSU golf from my bio on all my social media platforms. It made me feel as though I was choosing between my team and my app.

As a female student and athlete-entrepreneur I was not able to promote and later profit from my own my platform. Compliance was monitoring every move I made especially regarding social media. My Coach Kelli Kamiura did a wonderful job of making sure I was always staying compliant. Although the compliance staff here at WSU is great and was wonderful to work with the process is very difficult and frustrating in comparison to my non-student athlete peers who were creating and in the process of launching apps. With the passing of NIL this process will definitely be a lot easier.

I noticed the differences between my experience and my peers when I joined a female app founders club that met every month. I joined with six women in the founder's club to discuss our experiences in developing our technologies and share experiences. For me, as women of color, I don't reflect the world that is the typical of most Silicon Valley app guys. In addition, I was having to engage with compliance issues my fellow student entrepreneurs did not have to face because of my status as a student athlete. It was very frustrating to hear that most of the women were able to promote and share their app with the world whereas I had limited ability to do so as a student-athlete.

This designation of student-athlete is presented to perspective students as something that is of benefit to them, an opportunity to pursue both their academic and athletic aspirations on a dual track that gives them stability and community. However, through my process of developing my app, I have found that because of the NCAA's regulations, this title sometimes acts in hinderance to a student's aspirations that don't fall so squarely in the distinction of student or athlete. I found myself at a disadvantage to non-athletes on campus who had similar entrepreneurial pursuits because their developments were allowed to exist outside of the context of what they contribute to the school.

I understand that this is a nuanced conversation and that there might be a concern for how the loosening of these regulations could cause corruption, dishonesty, and an unfair advantage for colleges who can offer more immediate incentives than others. However, I urge those on this committee today to not view the purists made by the Name Image and Likeness bill as a final victory for student athletes, but instead view it as a jumping off point towards a larger goal of protecting and fostering them.

In tandem with the financial policies that are implemented, it is important to discuss how to support all athletes within whatever new system exists. In much of the discourse, I have heard about the changing landscape of the Name, Image, and Likeness, both the public perception and political questions seem to be centering around the stars of the collegiate sports world. Namely football players and basketball players, and mostly men. The concern here is that the lesser lucrative sports are getting lost in the conversation, and by extension, so are the players. Our unique perspectives, opportunities for sport participation, and passions outside of sport are just as relevant and important as our counterparts in the typical revenue generating sports.

I know this too well as a female athlete of color, currently playing a sport in woman's golf that isn't the most lucrative or visible, and that I why I feel as though it would be wishful thinking to believe that someone like me would ever be on an equal financial playing field as a star quarterback. It is important to view the evolution of this conversation on a parallel path with the supplementary support and development of the student-athlete's business acumen. One of the only ways someone like me can equal the playing field is by marketing myself, essentially building the uniqueness of my circumstances as a female golfer of color into a valuable brand. I also think that the student portion of a student-athlete's identity should be better catered to the

athlete portion, with more of an emphasis on business, financial, and economic literacy so that they are better prepared to make decisions and advocate on their own behalf. Washington State has been integral in helping me in this area by providing resources in student-athlete development, personal branding, financial literacy, and even offering a for-credit Entrepreneurship course catered to elements of Name, Image and Likeness, but it is important that this is something that is required on a more universal level so that every athlete, regardless of circumstances or the location of their institution, can receive the support they need.

Conclusion

In closing, I share my experience today in the hopes that you will appreciate that the opportunities afforded student athletes with the use of our name image likeness impacts all student-athletes whether we are entrepreneurs creating apps or the starting quarterback. Having a national standard that will support all student-athletes is important and I hope that today I hope I can provide a unique perspective as I experience the new NIL opportunities from an athletic and entrepreneurial vantage point.

Thank you for the opportunity to share my story.