

119TH CONGRESS
2D SESSION

S. 4177

To establish rules regarding eligibility of student athletes for intercollegiate athletics, and for other purposes.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

MARCH 24, 2026

Mr. TUBERVILLE introduced the following bill; which was read twice and referred to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation

A BILL

To establish rules regarding eligibility of student athletes for intercollegiate athletics, and for other purposes.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4 This Act may be cited as the “Student Athlete Act
5 of 2026”.

6 **SEC. 2. DEFINITIONS.**

7 In this Act:

8 (1) **ATHLETIC DEPARTMENT.**—The term “ath-
9 letic department” means a department at an institu-
10 tion of higher education that sponsors or conducts 1

1 or more varsity intercollegiate athletics programs in
2 which student athletes enrolled at the institution of
3 higher education compete in athletic contests against
4 student athletes enrolled at another institution of
5 higher education.

6 (2) CONFERENCE.—The term “conference”
7 means an organization that—

8 (A) has as members 2 or more institutions
9 of higher education;

10 (B) arranges or conducts season-long
11 intercollegiate athletic events to determine,
12 among its members, a champion in a particular
13 intercollegiate sport; and

14 (C) sets rules for varsity intercollegiate
15 sports competition among its members.

16 (3) GRANT-IN-AID.—The term “grant-in-aid”
17 means—

18 (A) tuition, room, board, books, fees, and
19 personal expenses paid or provided by an insti-
20 tution of higher education up to the full cost of
21 attendance;

22 (B) Federal Pell Grants and other State
23 and Federal grants unrelated to, and not
24 awarded with respect to, participation in varsity
25 intercollegiate sports competition;

1 (C) health insurance and the costs of
 2 health care wholly or partly self-funded by the
 3 National Collegiate Athletic Association, a con-
 4 ference, or an institution of higher education;

5 (D) disability and loss of value insurance
 6 that is wholly or partly self-funded by the Na-
 7 tional Collegiate Athletic Association, a con-
 8 ference, or an institution of higher education;
 9 and

10 (E) career counseling or job placement
 11 services available to all students at an institu-
 12 tion of higher education.

13 (4) INSTITUTION OF HIGHER EDUCATION.—The
 14 term “institution of higher education” has the
 15 meaning given that term in section 101 of the High-
 16 er Education Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 1001).

17 (5) NATIONAL COLLEGIATE ATHLETIC ASSOCIA-
 18 TION.—The term “National Collegiate Athletic Asso-
 19 ciation” means the National Collegiate Athletic As-
 20 sociation that functions as an authority for inter-
 21 collegiate athletics in the United States (or a suc-
 22 cessor organization).

23 (6) STUDENT ATHLETE.—The term “student
 24 athlete” means an individual who engages or is eligi-
 25 ble to engage in intercollegiate athletics.

1 (7) TRANSFER PORTAL.—The term “transfer
2 portal” means a process managed by the National
3 Collegiate Athletic Association that facilitates the
4 transfer of student athletes from one institution of
5 higher education to another institution of higher
6 education for the purpose of engaging, or being able
7 to engage in the future, in intercollegiate athletics.

8 (8) VARSITY INTERCOLLEGIATE ATHLETICS
9 PROGRAM.—The term “varsity intercollegiate ath-
10 letics program” means a sport played at the inter-
11 collegiate level, administered by an athletic depart-
12 ment, for which eligibility requirements for partici-
13 pation by student athletes are established by the Na-
14 tional Collegiate Athletic Association or a con-
15 ference.

16 (9) VARSITY INTERCOLLEGIATE SPORTS COM-
17 PETITION.—The term “varsity intercollegiate sports
18 competition” means a competition—

19 (A) between or among student athletes;
20 and

21 (B) involving 2 or more varsity intercolle-
22 giate athletics programs sponsored by different
23 institutions of higher education.

1 **SEC. 3. LIMITATION OF STUDENT ATHLETE ELIGIBILITY.**

2 Notwithstanding any rules set forth by the National
3 Collegiate Athletic Association, a student athlete shall
4 have 5 consecutive years of eligibility to play intercolle-
5 giate athletics, regardless of injury or any other event.

6 **SEC. 4. TRANSFER PORTAL.**

7 (a) **ROLE OF NATIONAL COLLEGIATE ATHLETIC AS-**
8 **SOCIATION.**—The National Collegiate Athletic Association
9 shall set forth rules relating to the transfer portal, includ-
10 ing with respect to the 1 or more periods during which
11 a student athlete may formally notify the institution of
12 higher education in which the student athlete is enrolled
13 of his or her intent to transfer to another institution of
14 higher education.

15 (b) **EFFECT OF TRANSFER.**—

16 (1) **IN GENERAL.**—Except as provided in para-
17 graph (2), a student athlete enrolled at an institu-
18 tion of higher education who transfers to another in-
19 stitution of higher education shall be ineligible to
20 participate in any athletic competition sponsored by
21 the National Collegiate Athletic Association during
22 the academic year, beginning at the start of the fall
23 semester and ending at the end of an institution of
24 higher education's final summer session, in which
25 the student athlete entered the transfer portal.

1 (2) EXCEPTION FOR INITIAL TRANSFER.—

2 Paragraph (1) shall not apply to the first transfer
3 of a student athlete from an institution of higher
4 education to another institution of higher education.

5 (c) CERTAIN OTHER RULES AND REGULATIONS.—

6 This section shall supersede any National Collegiate Ath-
7 letic Association rule or regulation related to transfer eligi-
8 bility that is in effect on the date of the enactment of this
9 Act.

10 (d) ANTITRUST EXEMPTION.—Notwithstanding any
11 provision of the Sherman Act (15 U.S.C. 1 et seq.) to the
12 contrary, the National Collegiate Athletic Association (or
13 any successor organization) may establish rules relating
14 to the transfer portal under this section.

15 **SEC. 5. ADDITIONAL PROTECTIONS FOR STUDENT ATH-**
16 **LETES.**

17 (a) GRANT-IN-AID PROTECTION.—Subject to sub-
18 section (b), an institution of higher education shall honor
19 the original grant-in-aid commitment made by the institu-
20 tion of higher education to a student athlete.

21 (b) EFFECT OF TRANSFER.—In the case of a student
22 athlete who transfers from one institution of higher edu-
23 cation to another institution of higher education, sub-
24 section (a)—

1 (1) shall not apply to the former institution of
2 higher education of the student athlete; and

3 (2) shall apply to the new institution of higher
4 education to which the student athlete transfers.

5 (c) RULE OF CONSTRUCTION.—Nothing in this sec-
6 tion may be construed to prohibit an institution of higher
7 education from revoking the grant-in-aid of a student ath-
8 lete or former student athlete who does not remain in good
9 standing in accordance with the standards or code of con-
10 duct of the institution of higher education.

11 **SEC. 6. RELATIONSHIP TO STATE LAW.**

12 No State or political subdivision of a State may
13 adopt, maintain, enforce, or continue in effect any law,
14 regulation, rule, requirement, or standard that—

15 (1) conflicts with the provisions of this Act; or

16 (2) limits or restricts the rights of student ath-
17 letes, the National Collegiate Athletic Association,
18 conferences, or institutions of higher education
19 under this Act.

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