



**Opening Statement of Rep. Burgess Owens (R-UT), Chairman
Subcommittee on Higher Education and Workforce Development
Joint Hearing: “Safeguarding Student-Athletes from NLRB Misclassification”
March 12, 2024**

(As prepared for delivery)

The world of college sports is in a transformational period. In 2021, the Supreme Court decided *NCAA vs Alston* and ushered college sports into a new era of name, image, and likeness compensation, or NIL for short. Student-athletes have also gained newfound freedom to transfer schools freely.

But at its core, college sports are about enhancing student-athletes’ academic experience and molding young people into productive citizens. All of that could be lost if the radical Biden NLRB has its way.

The Biden NLRB is the most activist pro-union government agency in history, and it has taken this opportunity to declare student-athletes to be employees. At Dartmouth, an unprecedented NLRB ruling classified student-athletes as employees and has paved the way for the basketball team to unionize.

In no world should a scholarship athlete be considered an employee for playing basketball. Even more ridiculous, the Dartmouth basketball players do not even receive athletic scholarships, only financial aid based on need. Receiving some clothes and shoes to play a sport you love does not make a student-athlete an employee.

Classifying student-athletes as employees is an existential threat to the future of college sports on many campuses. The increased costs of unionization and administrative headaches would threaten to make low-funded programs economically unviable, including many women’s sports and small-school athletic programs, resulting in fewer teams, fewer scholarships, and fewer opportunities for young people.