



Senate Committee on Government Operations, Labor, Economic Development

2025 Assembly Bill 1034 & 2025 Senate Bill 1075

*relating to: name, image, and likeness rights for University of Wisconsin System student athletes;
maintenance costs for intercollegiate athletic facilities*

March 3, 2026

Chairman Feyen & Members of the Senate Committee on Government Operations, Labor,
Economic Development:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today in support of Assembly Bill 1034 and Senate Bill 1075 relating to name, image, likeness rights for University of Wisconsin System student athletes and maintenance costs for intercollegiate athletic facilities.

Wisconsin Athletics has a clear mission: “To elevate the lives of our student-athletes, each other, and the people in our community.” Our mission comes to life through three foundational pillars:

Competitive excellence. A desire to sustain a culture of winning so that student-athletes can pursue and accomplish their athletic goals, alums can feel a sense of pride, and the state of Wisconsin can thrive.

Tethered to education. College athletics is anchored in the educational mission of higher education, not separate from it, and we strive to ensure our student-athletes earn a degree from a world-class institution. A holistic student-athlete opportunity is life-changing and creates a foundation for successful life-long outcomes.

Broad-based opportunity. We are committed to supporting each of our 23 varsity sports comprised of more than 700 student-athletes. That support expands student-athlete opportunity, whether the sport generates revenue or not. This commitment ensures that all sports are resourced for competitive excellence, including our Olympic and women’s sports, and that our student-athletes continue to benefit from participating in Division I athletics.

UW Athletics serves as an economic engine for both the City of Madison and the State of Wisconsin, generating substantial economic impact and tax revenues through our operational footprint and by attracting nearly two million visitors to campus for events each year. Each home football game produces \$19 million in economic impact on the state. The constituents of the State of Wisconsin need Wisconsin Athletics to sustain competitive excellence.

While our mission and our foundational pillars do not change, the world around us does, as exemplified by the volatility in the collegiate athletics industry over the last several years.

Historically, Wisconsin Athletics has self-generated resources at or above the necessary level to fulfill its mission. For decades, the department has been competitively and academically successful, consistently outperforming our competitors while providing a net positive financial and reputational return to UW-Madison and the greater community.

The Name, Image, Likeness (NIL) era, along with recent settlements, has created unique challenges for Wisconsin Athletics. This past spring, a settlement was reached in several class-action lawsuits brought against the NCAA and major college athletic conferences, commonly referred to as the House Settlement. Among several terms, payments to former student-athletes totaling in the billions will be made in the years ahead, and Wisconsin, like all of our peers, will have to pay our share of the settlement. The settlement also allows institutions to share revenue with student-athletes for the first time, with direct payments to students. The House Settlement, beginning in FY26 has added a \$20.5 million annual expense to the budget to cover the cost of the revenue-sharing requirements. This has created significant pressures on our current financial model.

Assembly Bill 1034 and Senate Bill 1075 provide support for Wisconsin Athletics in two main ways. The first is financial relief in the form of debt service payments on existing facilities. The second is statutory changes which will ensure that Wisconsin can compete on a national level with peer institutions in states that have already passed NIL legislation.

An investment of \$15 million in support of debt service payments would be instrumental in delivering relief for the program. This support and investment from the state would be critical in allowing us to field competitive football and basketball teams and support our highly successful Olympic sports programs. At present, there are 32 states that have passed NIL laws in differing intent and scope. The statutory changes would level the playing field with our peers and competitors while ensuring student athletes are compliant with existing policies. In short, to remain competitive, Wisconsin must operate under a legal framework that mirrors what peer institutions already benefit from.

College athletics has changed dramatically. The mission and expectations of Badger Athletics have not. Wisconsin Athletics adds significant value to our community, our city, our state, and our university, but our athletic programs are at risk without modifications to our financial model. We believe it is in the interest of the citizens of Wisconsin that a strong and broad UW-Madison athletics program be sustained, including the ability for all of our 23 varsity sports teams to compete at the highest level; for our 700+ student athletes – inclusive of elite female athletes and future Olympians—to achieve their goals; and for our students' academic success to lead the way. Thank you again for the opportunity to testify on the impact of Assembly Bill 1034 and Senate Bill 1075 on Wisconsin Athletics and UW-Madison.