



# Board of Commissioners of Cook County

118 North Clark Street  
Chicago, IL

## Legislation Text

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File #: 26-0649, Version: 1

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### PROPOSED RESOLUTION

**REQUESTING THAT THE CCDPH IN CONJUNCTION WITH THE CCHHS DEVELOP CTE DAMAGE AWARENESS PROGRAMS AND HELP FACILITATE REFERRALS TO CONCUSSION CLINICS FOR ATHLETES; THAT THE STATE OF IL REGULATE NIL DEALS; AND THAT THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT FUND RESEARCH ON HOW THE PORTAL AND NIL DEALS MAY AFFECT CTE INJURIES AND THE MENTAL HEALTH OF YOUNG ATHLETES**

**WHEREAS**, the Mayo Clinic explains Chronic Traumatic Encephalopathy (CTE), as a brain disease likely caused by repeated head injuries, often occurring in contact sports or military combat. It causes the death of nerve cells in the brain, known as degeneration. The only way to definitively diagnose CTE is after death during an autopsy of the brain; and

**WHEREAS**, in people who were confirmed to have CTE at autopsy, symptoms have included cognitive impairment including trouble thinking, memory loss, and loss of executive planning; behavioral changes including impulse behavior, and aggression; mood changes including depression, emotional instability, substance misuse and suicidal thoughts and behavior; and movement changes including trouble walking, parkinsonism and gradual loss of control; and

**WHEREAS**, experts believe symptoms can appear early in life between the late 20s and early 30s, the first form of CTE may cause mental health and behavioral issues; and

**WHEREAS**, according to an article published by the Harvard Medical School, a study found that children ages 6 to 14 who played tackle football had 15 times more head impacts, and 23 times more hard head impacts, than those who play flag football. Researchers say CTE may be far more widespread in young people who play a lot of contact sports than previously believed. A study of brains from contact sport players who died before they reached age 30 showed that more than 40 percent had CTE; and

**WHEREAS**, the same Harvard Medical School article reports that CTE caused by repetitive mild Traumatic Brain Injury (mTBI) continues to progress decades after the injuries have stopped, indicating that once the cascades are initiated, they continue to execute their effects and that the longer the individual lives, the worse the symptoms become. Athletes engaging in high impact sports, whether it is at the professional, collegiate, or high school level, should be counseled on the importance of reporting symptoms as well as “occult” concussive events not visibly recognized by team trainers. Furthermore, if an individual is known to have sustained repetitive concussive or sub concussive blows to the head over time, they should be referred to a specialty center, such as a concussion clinic; and

**WHEREAS**, the NCAA transfer portal was introduced in October 2018 to streamline the transfer process for college student-athletes. It serves as a centralized database where student-athletes can officially declare their intent to transfer to a different school, allowing coaches from other programs to view their information and reach out if interested, which has significantly changed the landscape of college athletics, promoted athlete mobility and provided more opportunities for student-athletes to find programs that better suit their needs; and

**WHEREAS**, the transfer portal has led to a higher rate of student-athletes leaving their colleges, which can disrupt team dynamics and rosters. The lack of mandatory orientation sessions and protective guardrails has made it easier for student-athletes to make impulsive decisions that could derail their educational progress, giving up their scholarships; and

**WHEREAS**, in “*The Unintended Consequences of the NCAA College Athletics Transfer Portal*”, published in the

Journal of Higher Education Athletics and Innovation, Volume 2 Issue 1 (2023-12-28), Dr. Renford Reese states that “between March and April 2022, at least five student-athletes died by suicide, and there are data that show that college athletes are increasingly grappling with depression, anxiety, and thoughts of suicide. Furthermore, there is currently a lack of scholarly research on the dynamics of the NCAA transfer portal. Only after sports science researchers begin collecting empirical data and producing studies on the effects of the portal will we understand the true costs and benefits of this platform.”; and

**WHEREAS**, NIL stands for "name, image and likeness" and refers to a person's legal right to control how their image is used, including commercially. Three years ago, a combination of NCAA rule changes and state laws restored NIL rights to college athletes, allowing them to make sponsorship deals ever since; and

**WHEREAS**, according to an MSN article, published December 19, 2025, NIL deals coupled with the portal have changed the landscape of amateur athletics forever, with major colleges able to pay millions in NIL contracts for transferred students arguably older and more ready-made for an athletics program, to achieve a win immediately, while offering fewer roster spots and scholarships to talented high school recruits, while encouraging college students to stay around longer; and

**WHEREAS**, as of late 2025, 45 states, including Illinois, plus Washington, D.C. allow some form of high school NIL, while a small group of states still ban it or heavily restrict it; and

**WHEREAS**, the pressure to build a marketable brand alongside academic and athletic demands, a responsibility most teenagers are not developmentally prepared to manage, has added another layer of stress. Researchers have found that the pressure to maintain a public image fosters feelings of inadequacy and unhealthy comparisons among teammates. College students managing multimillion-dollar portfolios, while daunting, has become normalized, with the portfolio they're managing leveraging their entire identity, image, and future. Any wrong step, whether that be an injury, a performance slump or a controversial social media post, could end in a loss of generational wealth, placing too much pressure on the shoulders of students who are still figuring out who they are; and

**WHEREAS**, it is incumbent upon our Federal Government to fund studies of CTE in young athletes geared towards understanding the role these injuries play in suicides, self-harm and overall mental health deterioration and consider stricter regulations for how the Portal operates and NIL deals are offered and administered.

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED**, that the members of the Cook County Board of Commissioners hereby urge the United States Congress to fund comprehensive research on how the Portal and NIL deals may affect CTE injuries and the mental health of young athletes; and

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that the members of the Cook County Board of Commissioners hereby urge the Illinois General Assembly to regulate NIL deals to avoid their unintended consequences and impact on the mental health of young athletes; and

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that the members of the Cook County Board of Commissioners hereby request that the Cook County Department of Public Health in conjunction with the Cook County Health and Hospitals System develop CTE damage awareness programs to be offered to high school students involved in contact sports, and help facilitate a referral system to concussion clinics for young athletes; and

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that a suitable copy of this Resolution be tendered to the Illinois' Congressional delegation, the House Speaker and Minority Leaders, the Senate Majority Leader and Minority Leader, and the White House; and

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that a suitable copy of this Resolution be tendered to IL Representative Emanuel Welch, Speaker of the House; IL Senator Don Harmon, President of the Senate; and IL Governor JB Pritzker.