

February 12, 2020

Representative Jeff Barker
Chair, House Business and Labor Committee

RE: HB 4057 – Prevents Lottery from allowing betting on college athletics

Dear Chair Barker;

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments in support of HB 4057, which would prohibit the Oregon Lottery from expanding sports betting to include collegiate sports. My name is Joel Walker, and I am a Men's Soccer Player at Oregon State University. I also serve on the PAC 12 Student-Athlete Leadership Team.

This past fall, Oregon Lottery released Scoreboard, an online sports betting platform. The rollout of the Scoreboard was limited to professional sporting events. I believe that limiting state sanctioned betting to professional sports is the best policy to protect student-athletes and the integrity of amateur collegiate athletics.

Being a college athlete is different than being a professional player. At OSU, we are students before we are athletes, and our coaches emphasize this throughout our training and academic program. As you may know, college student-athletes have distinct eligibility criteria, such as minimum GPA and progress towards a degree, that affect our ability to participate in gameplay. We are also a population of athletes that has greater public access than professionals, being involved in on-campus classes and members of the larger campus community. Because of these factors, many members of our campus community could have inside or at the very least perceived inside knowledge of our health, mental and academic states, which may influence their sports betting decisions. Student-athletes already observe the added pressure from the public spectating how we will perform on game day. Adding collegiate sports betting will just increase these pressures.

I am also concerned about how collegiate sports betting may impact the mental health and wellbeing of student-athletes. In 2017, two of our fellow OSU student-athletes created the [Dam Worth It](#) initiative to elevate the public conversation around student-athlete mental health. I believe that allowing an Oregon Lottery collegiate sports betting program will add new pressures on student-athletes including increased comments about their athletic performance tied to financial implications, outsiders attempting to assess their physical and mental health, along with other scenarios that could put our physical and mental wellbeing at risk. This is inconsistent with the values we have adopted on our own teams and shared nationally through the *Dam Worth It* campaign.

If the Legislature is not supportive of a ban on college sports betting, I would urge you to consider other measures so that student-athletes like me can be protected from the unattended consequences of sports betting.

Sincerely,

Joel Walker
Oregon State Men's Soccer