



athlete
mental health
alliance

Student Athlete Mental Health Legislative Action Toolkit

Athlete Mental Health Alliance (AMHA) Legislative Committee

There are bills in Congress right now that could change the mental health resources available to college athletes. You have more power to move those bills than you think. This toolkit shows you how.



www.athletesforhope.org
contact@athletesforhope.org



Why Legislation Matters for Athlete Mental Health

The conversation about athlete mental health has changed. Athletes are speaking up. Schools are listening. And now, legislators are starting to act.

But policy moves slowly- and it moves fastest when the people most affected show up, make noise, and put their names on paper.

That's you!

Research consistently shows that college athletes experience elevated rates of anxiety, depression, and burnout compared to general student populations (NCAA Sport Science Institute, 2023). Yet access to mental health support varies wildly depending on where you compete and what your school can afford. Federal and state legislation has the power to change that- to set minimum standards, fund new resources, and require schools to take athlete mental health seriously by law, not just in press releases.

The AMHA Legislative Toolkit provides you with 3 things:

1. A plain-language breakdown of the laws and proposals that affect you
2. A step-by-step guide to finding what's happening in your state
3. Ready-to-customize letters to send to the people making the decisions



Know the Landscape

Federal Legislation Affecting College Athlete Mental Health

The NCAA's Mental Health Mandate (This One Is Already Law)

Before we get to Congress, start here: the NCAA has codified mental health into its own Constitution.

Article 3 of the NCAA Constitution states that "athletics programs shall be conducted in a manner designed to protect, support and enhance the mental and physical health of student-athletes."

In January 2024, the NCAA approved updated Mental Health Best Practices -- evidence-based guidelines that all member institutions are expected to follow.

The NCAA has partnered with the National Council for Mental Wellbeing to provide fully funded Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) for Higher Education training across two divisions:

- Division III (launched March 2025, active through August 1, 2027): Up to 30 head coaches and athletic trainers per institution are eligible for in-person, certified training.
- Division II (launched August 2026): Each member school is eligible to receive one fully funded training session for athletics staff, head coaches, and trainers.

This covers things like:

- Access to licensed mental health professionals
- Protocols for mental health crises and referrals
- Suicide prevention and stigma reduction programming
- Policies protecting athletes from mental health-related retaliation

What this means for you: Your school has an obligation. If you feel that obligation isn't being met, you have standing to say so - to your Student Athlete Counselor (SASSO or SAAC), Conference, and Legislators.

Source: [NCAA Mental Health](#)

Bills in Congress Right Now

Improving Mental Health Access for Students Act

Bill numbers: S.1924 / H.R.3624 (119th Congress, active 2025–2026)

What it does: This bill expands federal support for mental health access at colleges and universities. It builds on existing programs to increase funding and reduce barriers for students -- including student athletes -- seeking mental health care.

Why athletes should care: Funding disparities are real. Schools with smaller athletic budgets often can't afford adequate mental health staffing. Federal funding levels the playing field.

Status: Introduced in the 119th Congress. Needs more co-sponsors and committee action before it can advance. Your letters move this needle.

Find it: Search "S.1924" or "H.R.3624" at [congress.gov](https://www.congress.gov)

TEAMS Act (Targeting Emotional And Mental Stability Act)

Introduced: 118th Congress (2023–2024) – watch for reintroduction

What it does: The TEAMS Act specifically targets college athlete mental health by expanding the Garrett Lee Smith Campus Suicide Prevention Grant Program to include initiatives focused on college athletes. It requires schools receiving grants to show active athletic department involvement -- meaning mental health resources can't just sit in the counseling center; they have to reach the locker room. Funded programs include peer-to-peer counseling, virtual mental health care, crisis lines, and stigma reduction efforts.

Bipartisan support: Originally sponsored by Rep. Richard Hudson (R-NC), Rep. Collin Allred (D-TX), Sen. John Boozman (R-AR), and Sen. Cory Booker (D-NJ). This bill had backing from major universities including Duke, UNC Chapel Hill, and UNC Charlotte.

Why athletes should care: This is the one bill that specifically names college athletes as the target population for federal mental health funding. If any bill deserves your voice, it's this one.

Find it: Search "TEAMS Act" or "S.2966" at [congress.gov](https://www.congress.gov). If a 119th Congress version has been introduced, it will appear there.

The Bottom Line on Federal Legislation

To summarize, three things are true right now:

- 1** The NCAA has requirements, but enforcement is inconsistent and varies by institution
- 2** Federal bills exist that would expand funding and protections specifically for college athletes, but they need your voice to advance!
- 3** No comprehensive federal law specifically guarantees mental health resources for college athletes yet – that gap is what advocates are working to close.



Find Your State's Bills

How to Locate Mental Health Legislation in Your State

Federal legislation sets the floor. State legislation often goes further – and moves faster. Many of the most significant athlete mental health policies are happening at the state level right now.

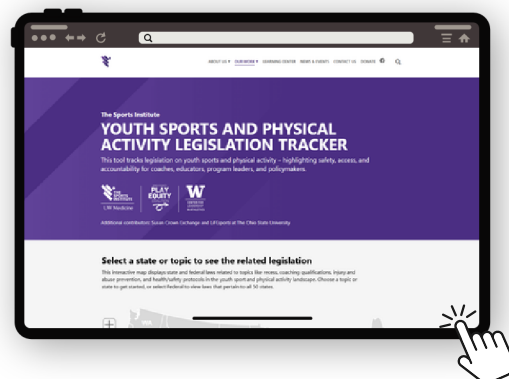
Here's how to find what's in play where you compete.



Step 1: Use the Sports Institute Legislation Tracker

The Sports Institute at UW Medicine maintains a free, interactive tracker of youth sports and physical activity legislation across all 50 states.

Go to: thesportsinstitute.com/youth-sports-and-physical-activity-legislation-tracker



How to use it:

1. Use the filter menu to select "Mental Health" as your topic category
2. Select your state (or browse all states)
3. Review what bills have been introduced, passed, or failed

The tracker covers legislation requiring coaches to complete mental health training, suicide prevention mandates, and athlete well-being policies. It is updated regularly (last updated September 2025).

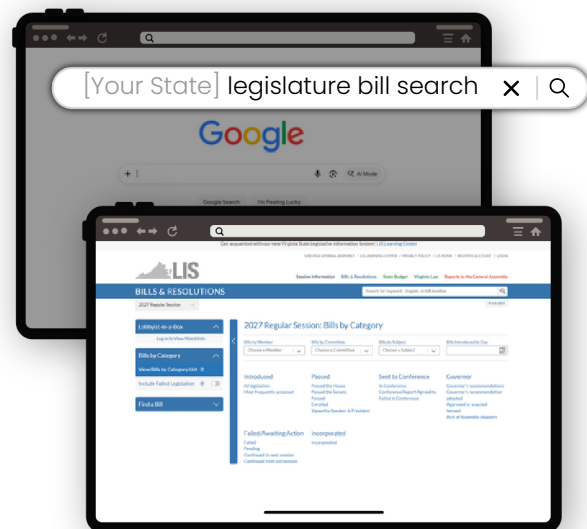
Limitation: The tracker focuses on youth sports. For college-level legislation, combine this with a direct search of your state legislature's website (see Step 2).

Step 2: Search Your State Legislature Directly

Every state has a publicly searchable legislative database.

Here's how to use it:

1. Google: "[Your State] legislature bill search" – the official .gov site will appear first
2. Search keywords: "athlete mental health," "student athlete," "mental health sports," "suicide prevention student"
3. Filter by: current session (2025–2026) to find active bills
4. Look for: committee assignments, hearing dates, vote status



What to look for:

- Bills in committee are where your letter has the most impact – a bill that hasn't been voted on yet can still be shaped.
- Bills with bipartisan sponsors are more likely to pass; look at who's signed on!
- Companion bills (same bill introduced in both House and Senate chambers of your state) signal serious momentum.

Step 3: Know Your Contacts

Once you've found a relevant bill, identify who to contact:

- **Bill sponsor:** The legislator who introduced the bill is your best first contact – they want to hear from constituents who support their work
- **Committee members:** Bills live and die in committee; committee members are high-leverage targets
- **Your own rep:** Even if they're not on the relevant committee, your direct representative needs to hear from their constituent athletes

Find your federal representatives: [usa.gov/elected-officials](https://www.usa.gov/elected-officials) (enter your zip code)

Find your state representatives: Google "[Your State] find my representative" – your state's official tool will appear

Step 4: Loop In Your SAAC

The Student Athlete Advisory Council (SAAC) at your school and conference level already has a channel to athletic administrators and, in some cases, legislators.

Bringing a specific bill to your SAAC gives your advocacy institutional backing. It also multiplies your reach – instead of one athlete sending a letter, it becomes your whole SAAC.

Template for SAAC outreach: [See Part 3, Letter C.](#)



Take Action

Customizable Letter Templates



How to Use These Templates

These letters are starting points, not scripts. The most effective advocacy letters are personal. Legislators -- and their staff -- respond to real stories. The template gives you the structure and the policy language; your job is to add 1-3 sentences in the marked sections that make it yours.

Tips before you send:

- Address your letter to the specific legislator (find the right name and title at [usa.gov/elected-officials](https://www.usa.gov/elected-officials))
- Send via email AND physical mail when possible - physical letters still carry weight!
- Follow up with a phone call to the legislator's office 1-2 weeks after sending; ask to speak with the staff member who handles health or education issues
- CC your school's SAAC president and athletic director so they're aware of your advocacy

Letter A: To a Federal Legislator

Use this to support the Improving Mental Health Access for Students Act (S.1924 / H.R.3624) or the TEAMS Act

[Date]

The Honorable [Full Name] [Title: United States Senator / Representative] [Office Address]

Dear [Senator/Representative] [Last Name]:

My name is [Your Name], and I am a [year, sport] student athlete at [University Name] in [City, State]. I am writing to ask for your support of [Bill Name and Number], legislation that would expand mental health resources for college athletes like me.

[ADD 2–3 SENTENCES HERE: Tell a brief, specific story. Why does mental health in college athletics matter to you personally? Have you or a teammate experienced inadequate access to mental health support? Have you been inspired by a peer's story? Be real -- this is the part they'll actually read.]

According to research from the NCAA Sport Science Institute, college athletes face significant mental health challenges including anxiety, depression, and burnout, often with fewer resources than their non-athlete peers. Despite the NCAA's Constitutional mandate to protect student athlete mental health, access to care varies significantly across institutions based on funding. Federal legislation like [Bill Name] would help close that gap.

As a student athlete, I am not asking for special treatment. I am asking for the floor to be raised. I believe that any young person competing at the college level -- investing their time, health, and often their scholarship in their institution -- deserves access to adequate mental health support.

I would welcome the opportunity to speak with you or your staff about this issue. I am available at [email] or [phone].

Thank you for your service and your time.

Respectfully,

[Your Name] [University] [Sport] [Year in School] [City, State ZIP] [Email] [Phone]

Letter B: To a State Legislator

Use this when a specific state bill has been identified using the legislation tracker

[Date]

The Honorable [Full Name] [Title: State Senator / State Representative] [Office Address]

Dear [Senator/Representative] [Last Name]:

My name is [Your Name], and I am a college student athlete at [University Name], located in your district / in [City, State]. I am writing regarding [Bill Name/Number], currently [in committee / awaiting a vote] in the [State] [Senate/House].

[ADD YOUR STORY HERE: Same guidance as Letter A -- 2-3 sentences that are genuinely yours. What brought you to this issue? Why does this bill matter to you specifically?]

[DESCRIBE THE BILL IN ONE SENTENCE: e.g., "This bill would require all colleges in [State] to provide student athletes with access to a licensed mental health counselor, ensuring that mental health support is not just a resource for well-funded programs."]

I know from experience -- and from conversations with teammates -- that mental health resources are not consistently available to athletes across our state. [OPTIONAL: Add a specific data point or example from your school or conference.]

College athletes in [State] compete for our schools, our communities, and in some cases, our state's national reputation. We deserve the same floor of mental health support that any student should be able to expect. [Bill Name] would be a meaningful step toward that.

I am available to speak with you or a member of your staff at any time. Thank you for your leadership on behalf of [State]'s student athletes.

Respectfully,

[Your Name] [University] [Sport and Position] [Year in School] [City, State ZIP] [Email]
[Phone]

Letter C: To a University President or Athletic Director

Use this for internal advocacy -- pushing your own institution to act, not waiting for legislation

[Date]

[Title] [Full Name] [University Name] [Address]

Dear [President/Director] [Last Name]:

My name is [Your Name], and I compete in [Sport] at [University Name]. I am writing as a student athlete who cares deeply about the mental health resources available to my teammates and to future athletes at this institution.

[ADD YOUR STORY OR OBSERVATION: What have you noticed about mental health resources at your school? Is there a gap in staffing, availability, or culture? Be specific but constructive -- you're asking for partnership, not putting anyone on trial.]

I am aware that the NCAA's updated Mental Health Best Practices (2024) require member institutions to provide evidence-based mental health support for student athletes. I also know that federal legislation is moving forward that may soon create additional requirements and funding opportunities.

I am reaching out because I believe [University Name] has an opportunity to get ahead of these changes -- and more importantly, to do right by our athletes now rather than waiting for a mandate.

Specifically, I am asking you to consider [CHOOSE ONE OR MORE: hiring an additional mental health counselor dedicated to athletes / reviewing our current protocols against the NCAA Best Practices checklist / establishing a student athlete mental health advisory group / designating a point of contact for athletes seeking mental health support].

I would welcome a conversation with you or the appropriate staff member. I am also happy to connect you with resources from the Athlete Mental Health Alliance at Athletes for Hope.

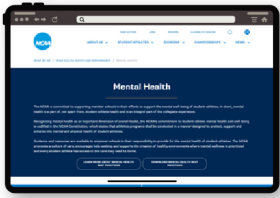
Thank you for your time and for your investment in our athletes.

With respect,

[Your Name] [Sport and Position] [Year in School] [Email] [Phone]

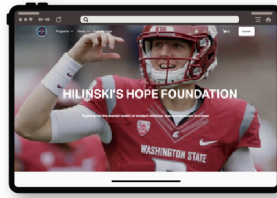
Supporting Resources

Key Research and Statistics



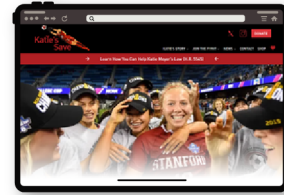
NCAA Sport Science Institute

Publishes annual mental health data on college athletes. Reports show elevated rates of anxiety (30%), depression (25%), and sleep disorders among student athletes. ncaa.org/mental-health



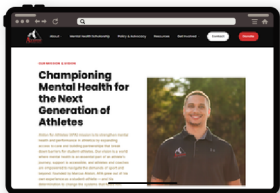
Hilinski's Hope

Mission is to educate, advocate, and eliminate stigma associated with mental illness while funding programs that support student-athlete mental health and wellness. hilinskishope.org



Katie's Save

Advocates for systemic changes at colleges and universities, improved family communication protocols, and has championed Katie Meyer's Law in California. katiessave.org



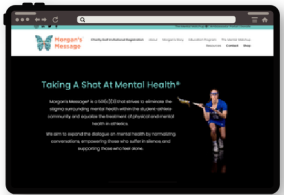
Alston for Athletes

Founded by Marcus Alston, a former D1 football player, after his own mental health struggles post-injury. Focuses on coach mental health training requirements and providing resources to student-athletes, coaches, and athletic directors. alstonforathletes.org



Athletes for Hope

The Center for Athlete Wellbeing connects athletes, coaches, parents, and teams with trusted resources, expert guidance, workshops, and stories that remind every athlete they do not have to navigate it alone. athletewellbeing.org



Morgan's Message

Athlete-led mental health nonprofit with data and resources. morgansmessage.org



Sarah Shulze Foundation

Focuses on mental health awareness, suicide prevention, and student-athlete advocacy. sarahshulzefoundation.org

Credible Sources for Your Letters

NCAA Mental Health Best Practices (2024)

Available at [ncaa.org](https://www.ncaa.org)

Journal of Athletic Training

Publishes peer-reviewed research on athlete mental health

British Journal of Sports Medicine

International research on mental health in sport

Find Your Legislators

Federal

[usa.gov/elected-officials](https://www.usa.gov/elected-officials)

State

Google "[your state] find my state representative"

Track bills

[congress.gov](https://www.congress.gov) for federal; your state legislature's website for state bills

State legislation tracker

thesportsinstitute.com/youth-sports-and-physical-activity-legislation-tracker

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

Will my letter actually make a difference?

Yes -- when combined with others. Legislators track constituent contact on bills. A single passionate letter from a constituent athlete stands out more than form emails. When multiple athletes from the same institution or district write, it signals organized constituent concern, which gets committee attention.

What if I don't know what bill to reference?

Start with the Improving Mental Health Access for Students Act (S.1924 / H.R.3624) at the federal level -- it's active right now. For your state, use the Sports Institute tracker (Step 1 in Module 2). If nothing comes up in your state, that itself is information worth bringing to your SAAC.

Do I have to share my personal story?

No. A letter with strong policy reasoning and your identity as a student athlete is still effective. But if you do have a personal story – or a teammate's story you can share with permission – it makes the letter significantly more powerful.

What if I'm not a citizen?

International student athletes can still write to university administrators (Letter C) and can contribute to advocacy through public statements, social media, and support for teammates who are contacting legislators. Some states also allow non-citizen residents to participate in certain advocacy activities.

How do I know if my letter worked?

You probably won't know immediately. Advocacy is long-game work. But you'll know you played a part when the bill gets a committee hearing, when a co-sponsor signs on, or when the law eventually passes. Track bills at [congress.gov](https://www.congress.gov) and set a Google alert for your state's bill number.

What's AMHA, and why should I trust this toolkit?

The [Athlete Mental Health Alliance](https://athletesforhope.org) (AMHA) is a collaborative of organizations working to advance athlete mental health, convened by Athletes for Hope. AMHA members include organizations like Hilinski's Hope, Morgan's Message, the Kevin Love Fund, The Hidden Opponent, and the Sarah Shulze Foundation – all athlete-led or athlete-centered. This toolkit was built by and for athlete advocates. To join the Athlete Mental Health Alliance, please email amha@athletesforhope.org.





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Email **amha@athletesforhope.org**

