

Senate Bill 518

Mr. Chair and members of the committee

In 2001 I had the honor to play football and be on the last ever ACC Championship team at the University of Maryland College Park; 10 years later, I would also serve as a Coach/ Administrator for Kerry McCoy's Wrestling ACC Championship wrestling team. All in total I have eight different Conference and Bowl Championship Rings. Since that time, I have lived a beautiful life having done Diversity and Inclusion work for the MLB, NBA, and NFL; but I had to also experience levels of discrimination as I played. I am one of the first Publicly gay Athletes in America to have the chance to come out in college sports, but one thing I Also had was to deal with bigotry, racism, and abuse from the public, fans, and even coaches.

Hear your name attached to words like Faggot, Pillow bitter and sinner, all while just merely trying to perform a duty in a contract. I even remember my Coach at Maryland when I wanted to take a class about LGBTQ rights to ask me, "What are you some faggot." These words at the time hurt me deeply, but I was not one to back down and passed it off as a mistake, but what was the mistake was that I had nowhere to turn to about a coach or staff questioning my academic choice. Today I am here to advocate for the 18-year-old Akil Patterson who was not tough enough to stop his coaches from limiting my academic life and understanding of self.

Athletes live a different life, waking up at 5 am for a 5:30 am workout halfway across campus and only a scooter or bike to make it on time in the cold. We sleep on buses and in corners of the gym with our books or tablets packed in our book bags. Even more so today having lived the BIG 10 life, many of our athletes miss 2 to 3 classes a week while traveling and they can not complain of protest to anyone because if they do, some type of retaliation may happen. They can be benched or scholarships were taken away for failure to comply with NCAA policies. We also know that athletes are not always open about issues with coaches and administration because they do not want to bring unneeded attention. Jordan McNair lost his life because the University Staff did not allow him to make a real choice in his life on how he wanted to live. After all, Jordan probably told to Suck it up. How many times have people been told to suck it up? Suck it up is not what a hurting athlete wants to hear and so we must pass legislation so that in the best interest of the student-athletes

Although Parts of this bill i am in favor of i would ask, that committee take a more in-depth look at the name of this bill. Saying Jordan's name does not mean that this bill is part of a legacy where we should connect it to NCAA reps, Lawyers or Agents.

Akil S. Patterson

Former Athlete / National Advocate for Sports

