BLM Sports Founder Cicley Gay Responds to Senate Passage of Protect College Sports Act

ATLANTA, GA, UNITED STATES, September 30, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Following the U.S. Senate's bipartisan 77–22 passage of the Protect College Sports Act of 2026 (S. 4668), Black Lives Matter Foundation Board Chair, BLM Sports founder and longtime philanthropist Cicley Gay is calling for the national conversation surrounding college athletics to extend beyond protecting athletes to examining how much power athletes actually have within the multibillion-dollar collegiate sports system. (Senate Committee on Commerce)

In a newly published commentary, "The Senate Passed the Protect College Sports Act. But Who Holds the Power?", Gay examines the legislation through the lens of athletes, families, Black communities and Historically Black Colleges and Universities.

The legislation establishes a federal framework addressing areas including Name, Image and Likeness rights, revenue sharing, scholarships, athlete health and safety, agents and transfers. Supporters say the national framework would provide greater stability and legal clarity within college athletics. (Senate Committee on Commerce)

Gay acknowledges those protections while arguing that the national discussion should also address a larger question:
Who gets a meaningful voice in creating the rules governing athletes' bodies, compensation, mobility and futures?
"Protection matters. But protection without power is not enough."

Gay writes from both an organizational and deeply personal perspective. Before founding BLM Sports, she was a sports mother of two Division 1 athletes who understands what it means to entrust coaches, trainers, universities and athletic programs with the health and future of her children.
That experience, she says, shapes how she evaluates the rapidly changing economics of college athletics.

FROM NIL TO ECONOMIC POWER
The debate surrounding the Protect College Sports Act comes as NIL compensation, institutional revenue sharing, transfer policies and the commercialization of collegiate athletics continue to transform the relationship between athletes and universities.
Gay argues that discussions about financial limits and accountability should not focus solely on

athletes.

In her commentary, she points to the broader economic ecosystem surrounding college athletics including coaching compensation, institutional revenue, contracts and administrative decision-making and asks policymakers and industry leaders to examine where financial restraints are imposed and where economic power remains concentrated. (Medium - https://cicley.medium.com/the-senate-passed-the-protect-college-sports-act-but-who-holds-the-power-18586234323c)

The Senate debate itself reflected these disagreements. Supporters have described the bill as establishing needed national standards and athlete protections, while opponents including Sen. Cory Booker, the NAACP and members of the Congressional Black Caucus have raised concerns regarding athlete influence, institutional legal protections and the potential consequences for Black athletes and other stakeholders.

BLACK ATHLETES AND HBCUs MUST HAVE A SEAT AT THE TABLE
For Gay, the conversation is particularly important for Black athletes, whose participation has played a significant role in the culture and economics of major college football and basketball.

She argues that Black athletes and HBCUs should not simply be considered after policies have been developed but should have meaningful participation in conversations shaping the future of collegiate athletics.

Gay is advocating for a broader discussion around an Athlete Bill of Rights, including consideration of:
Independent athlete representation and meaningful due process
Transparent revenue-sharing structures
Comprehensive and portable healthcare protections
Long-term protections related to documented athletic injuries
Greater transparency surrounding contracts
Fair athlete mobility
Independent accountability mechanisms
Greater NIL infrastructure and economic opportunities for HBCUs
Direct athlete participation in decisions affecting the future of college sports

BLM SPORTS PUTTING CAPITAL BEHIND THE CONVERSATION
Gay's position extends beyond public advocacy.

Through BLM Sports, the organization has announced nearly $200,000 in investments supporting nonprofits, HBCU athletics and community initiatives across the country, including programs connected to basketball, football, youth mentorship, wellness and community development. \

BLM Sports organizes its work around three principles:
CARE. CAPITAL. COMPETITION.

Care recognizes athletes as people before statistics.
Capital focuses on translating talent and opportunity into broader economic pathways.
Competition centers on expanding access to the resources young people and communities need to compete.
Gay argues that institutions benefiting from athletic talent should also consider how they reinvest resources into the athletes, schools and communities that contribute to the larger sports economy.

THE SENATE VOTE IS ONLY THE BEGINNING
The Protect College Sports Act now moves to the U.S. House of Representatives for consideration. (Senate Committee on Commerce - https://www.commerce.senate.gov/press/rep/release/senate-overwhelmingly-passes-protect-college-sports-act/?utm_source=chatgpt.com)
As lawmakers continue considering the future of college athletics, Gay is urging athletes, families, universities, conferences, policymakers, HBCUs, advocates and sports-industry leaders to remain engaged in the conversation.

Her central question remains:
As college athletics enters a new era, who will have the power to shape it?
For Gay, healthcare protections, scholarships, NIL rights, athlete safety and stability remain important parts of the discussion but they should exist alongside representation, transparency and accountability.
The next era of college athletics, she argues, should not simply be designed for athletes. Athletes should help design it.

READ CICLEY GAY'S FULL COMMENTARY
"The Senate Passed the Protect College Sports Act. But Who Holds the Power?"
Published on Medium by Cicley Gay, Founder of BLM Sports.

ABOUT CICLEY GAY
Cicley Gay is the Board Chairwoman of the Black Lives Matter Global Network Foundation and founder of BLM Sports. She is a philanthropist with more than two decades of experience supporting communities and advancing social-impact initiatives. Through BLM Sports, Gay advocates for an approach to athletics centered around Care, Capital and Competition, with particular attention to athlete wellness, economic opportunity, youth development, Black athletes and HBCU athletics.

ABOUT BLM SPORTS
BLM Sports works at the intersection of athletics, community investment and economic opportunity. Through strategic investments, partnerships and advocacy, the organization

supports athletes, HBCUs, nonprofit organizations and community-based initiatives while promoting greater access, wellness and opportunity within sports. BLMsports.net

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Interview Opportunities:
Cicley Gay is available for television, radio, podcast, print and digital interviews to discuss the Protect College Sports Act, NIL and athlete compensation, Black athletes and economic power in college

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