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MISSOURI HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Melanie Stinnett

State Representative
District 133

November 12th, 2025

Charlie Baker
President, National Collegiate Athletic Association
700 W. Washington Street
Indianapolis, IN 46204

Re: Request for Fair Consideration of Missouri State University's FBS Postseason Eligibility

Dear President Baker,

I am writing to respectfully urge the NCAA to allow the Missouri State University Bears football team to be eligible for postseason play as the program transitions to the Football Bowl Subdivision (FBS).

Put simply, let the Bears play!

The student-athletes at Missouri State have worked tirelessly to elevate their program and represent our state with integrity and excellence. They should not be denied the opportunity to compete in a bowl game because of an administrative decision made at the institutional level. The current NCAA transition rule, which automatically bars programs from postseason eligibility during their reclassification period, unintentionally punishes athletes for circumstances entirely beyond their control.

This policy is outdated and inconsistent with the direction of modern college athletics. In recent years, programs like James Madison and Liberty demonstrated they could compete immediately at the FBS level, yet their players were still barred from postseason play. These restrictions do not serve the principles of competitive fairness or educational purposes; they only limit opportunities, exposure, and potential NIL value for athletes who have earned their place on the field.

The Supreme Court's decision in *NCAA v. Alston* (2021) and subsequent rulings have made clear that broad, anti-competitive restrictions on student-athletes must be closely scrutinized. Rules that lack a legitimate, evidence-based connection to competitive balance or athlete welfare are increasingly viewed as arbitrary and unjustified. A blanket postseason ban for transitioning programs fits that description.

Missouri State's case is compelling. The university has made a strategic, well-prepared move to elevate its program and resources. Its athletes, coaches, and community have embraced the challenge. Allowing these players to compete for a postseason opportunity would not only align

with fairness and precedent but also reflect the NCAA's own stated commitment to supporting student-athletes' growth and opportunity.

I encourage the NCAA to consider Missouri State's petition for a waiver favorably and to revisit this rule more broadly in the future. Our athletes deserve a system that rewards achievement, not one that penalizes ambition.

Thank you for your time, consideration, and leadership in guiding college athletics toward a fairer and more forward-looking future.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Melanie Stinnett". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Melanie Stinnett
State Representative, Missouri House of Representatives
District 133