

SENATE BILL REPORT

2SHB 1025

As Reported by Senate Committee On:
Higher Education & Workforce Development, March 25, 2009

Title: An act relating to cost savings on course materials.

Brief Description: Requiring disclosure of certain information relating to higher education course materials.

Sponsors: House Committee on Education Appropriations (originally sponsored by Representatives Armstrong, Upthegrove and Wallace).

Brief History: Passed House: 3/05/09, 97-0.

Committee Activity: Higher Education & Workforce Development: 3/24/09, 3/25/09 [DP].

SENATE COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION & WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

Majority Report: Do pass.

Signed by Senators Kilmer, Chair; Jarrett, Vice Chair; Becker, Ranking Minority Member; Hewitt, Jacobsen, Kastama, McAuliffe, Pflug, Shin and Stevens.

Staff: Aldo Melchiori (786-7439)

Background: A 2005 study conducted by the U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO) stated that college textbook prices nearly tripled from December 1986 to December 2004. These prices increased by 186 percent, while tuition and fees increased by 240 percent, and overall inflation was 72 percent during the same time period. The GAO study attributes textbook cost increases to several factors. The primary reason the cost of textbooks has increased in recent years is because of "bundling," which is the addition of supplemental materials, such as CD-ROMs. Another factor cited in the study was the frequent revision of textbooks.

Each of the six public baccalaureate institutions in the state is affiliated with a bookstore. In 2006 the Legislature passed legislation requiring the boards of regents of the state universities, regional universities, and The Evergreen State College (TESC) to work with affiliated bookstores, students, and faculty representatives to adopt rules for affiliated bookstores and rules directing faculty to consider price when assigning course materials. In

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2007 the Legislature added community and technical colleges to the list of schools covered by the 2006 legislation.

The 2008 Higher Education Act requires institutions of higher education publishers to (1) disclose pricing information up-front to faculty; (2) offer textbooks and supplemental materials “unbundled” (separately); and (3) to the maximum extent practicable, to provide the prices and International Standard Book Numbers (ISBNs) of required and recommended textbooks when students register for classes.

Summary of Bill: Affiliated bookstores must disclose information on required course materials at least four weeks prior to the start of the class for which the materials are required. Course material information includes title, author(s), edition, price, and ISBN. This requirement is waived for faculty who were hired four weeks or less before the start of class and may also be waived on a case-by-case basis by the Chief Academic Officer. Faculty must consider open textbooks and collections of digital materials when considering the least costly options for course materials. Faculty and staff are no longer required to work with publishers to create bundles of course materials if they deliver cost savings to students.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: No.

Effective Date: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony: PRO: The cost of textbooks can be prohibitively high. Colleges know the textbooks that will be used in advance for most courses, so it should not be a problem to provide this information to students who want to purchase their books elsewhere. Students will be able to find books that cost less over the internet. Many faculty already do what they can to help students find books at the best price. This is a step in the right direction for making college more affordable. College bookstores are primarily a service to students.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Representative Armstrong, prime sponsor; Mike Bogatay, Washington State Library; Cable Green, State Board for Community and Technical Colleges; Wendy Rader-Konofalski, Washington Education Association; Ann Anderson, Central Washington University; Sherry Burke, Western Washington University; Julie Suchanek, TESC.