
Higher Education Committee

HB 2796

Brief Description: Providing students with the costs of required course materials during registration.

Sponsors: Representatives Van Werven, Lytton, Stambaugh, Bergquist, Hargrove, Haler, Zeiger, Kilduff, Young, Stanford, Buys, Wilson and Tarleton.

<p style="text-align: center;">Brief Summary of Bill</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Requires the community and technical colleges to indicate the cost of any required textbook or other course material to students in the course description during the registration process.

Hearing Date: 1/29/16

Staff: Megan Mulvihill (786-7304).

Background:

Textbook Costs.

According to the Government Accountability Office (GAO), the price of textbooks rose 82 percent between 2002 and 2013. The Washington Financial Aid Association estimates that for the 2016-17 academic year, students will spend around \$825 per year on books and supplies. A survey conducted by the United States Public Interest Research Group found that 65 percent of students had decided against buying a textbook because of its cost, and 48 percent said the cost of textbooks impacted how many and which classes they took.

The increased costs of textbooks can be attributed, in part, to revisions and bundling. Textbooks are generally revised every three to four years by publishers to reflect changes in material or teaching methods. Revisions increase the costs of textbooks and significantly reduces an older textbook's resale value. In addition, many textbooks are bundled with supplemental materials such as CD-ROMs or online access codes. Bundled textbooks are often more expensive because of the additional materials and once opened, cannot be returned to the bookstore if a student

This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not a part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.

withdraws or drops a class. In recent years, the availability of digital textbook rentals have introduced cheaper methods for obtaining textbooks and some educational materials are now available for free online.

Higher Education Opportunity Act.

The federal government passed the Higher Education Opportunity Act in 2008, which required increased transparency regarding the costs of textbooks. Institutions of higher education receiving federal assistance are to post textbook costs and information online, such as the International Student Book Number (ISBN) and a description of any changes in a revised edition. The GAO found that 81 percent of schools provided textbook information online. Washington passed a similar law in 2006.

Washington's Course Material Price and Information Disclosure Law.

The institutions of higher education are required to have rules to ensure their affiliated bookstores:

- provide students with the option of purchasing materials that are unbundled when possible;
- disclose to faculty and staff the costs to students;
- disclose publicly how new editions vary from previous editions;
- actively promote and publicize buy-back programs;
- disclose retail costs for course materials on a per course basis to faculty, staff, and the public; and
- disclose information to students regarding the titles, authors, editions, prices, and ISBN at least four weeks before the start of class for required course materials.

Faculty and staff are also supposed to consider the least costly practices in assigning course material, such as using the cheapest edition available, using free online web and library sources, or using free, open course textbooks when available.

Summary of Bill:

The community and technical colleges must indicate the cost of any required textbook or other course material to students in the course description during the registration process.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on 1/21/16.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of the session in which the bill is passed.