
HOUSE BILL 2686

State of Washington

64th Legislature

2016 Regular Session

By Representatives Sullivan, Walkinshaw, Bergquist, Kilduff, Rossetti, Pike, Zeiger, Stanford, Magendanz, Farrell, Santos, Ormsby, and Pollet

Read first time 01/18/16. Referred to Committee on Higher Education.

1 AN ACT Relating to making the cost of textbooks and other college
2 course materials more affordable; adding new sections to chapter
3 28B.50 RCW; adding a new section to chapter 28B.77 RCW; creating new
4 sections; and providing an expiration date.

5 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF WASHINGTON:

6 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 1.** (1) The legislature recognizes that the
7 cost of textbooks has increased at three times the rate of inflation
8 since 1977. The average undergraduate student at a public four-year
9 institution of higher education spends about one thousand two hundred
10 dollars per year on textbooks and other course supplies. While
11 alternatives exist to purchasing new textbooks, such as renting,
12 buying used, digital versions, or finding open source textbooks, many
13 students are still not able to afford textbooks and may opt out of
14 purchasing them. Open course databases have emerged as an alternative
15 for faculty to provide low-cost or free textbooks and other course
16 materials to students, thereby increasing the affordability of higher
17 education.

18 (2) The state board for community and technical colleges
19 completed an open course library of eighty-one high enrollment
20 courses in 2013. The Student Public Interest Research Groups (Student
21 PIRGs) conducted an analysis of the student savings from the open

1 course library and estimated that, during the 2012-13 academic year,
2 the open course library saved students an estimated two million nine
3 hundred thousand dollars. In addition, they estimated that the open
4 course library saves students an average of ninety-six dollars per
5 class. The legislature recognizes that the open course library and
6 similar efforts help to make higher education more affordable and
7 should be expanded.

8 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 2.** A new section is added to chapter 28B.50
9 RCW to read as follows:

10 The definitions in this section apply throughout sections 3
11 through 6 of this act unless the context clearly requires otherwise.

12 (1) "Open course library" means the collection of shareable
13 course materials, such as digital textbooks, syllabi, readings,
14 assignments, and assessments, provided online by the college board
15 for free or for less than thirty dollars for the community and
16 technical college system's highest enrolled courses.

17 (2) "Open educational resources" means freely accessible, openly
18 licensed educational textbooks, documents, material, and media that
19 reside in the public domain for free use and repurposing for the
20 intention of teaching, learning, assessing, and researching.

21 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 3.** A new section is added to chapter 28B.50
22 RCW to read as follows:

23 By fall 2016, the community and technical colleges shall revise
24 their college catalogs and course descriptions to designate which
25 courses qualify as having open educational resources. A course
26 qualifies as having open educational resources if the majority of the
27 required materials' costs are eliminated through the use of open
28 educational resources.

29 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 4.** A new section is added to chapter 28B.50
30 RCW to read as follows:

31 (1) The college board shall administer a grant program to fund
32 campus level coordinators to promote and facilitate expansion of the
33 open course library. To be eligible for the grant program, a
34 community or technical college must submit an application to the
35 college board along with a pledge of financial or in-kind resources
36 to support the expansion effort. The application must indicate how
37 the community or technical college will contribute to the goal of

1 expanding access to free and low-cost textbooks and other course
2 materials.

3 (2) The college board shall select grant recipients based on the
4 following priorities:

5 (a) Those that project the lowest textbook costs to students;

6 (b) Those that demonstrate the largest reduction in textbook
7 costs to students; and

8 (c) Those that most efficiently and effectively distribute
9 resources across an array of colleges and courses, factoring in
10 course enrollments; different subject matters; required courses for
11 general education requirements; and diversity in class size, degree
12 and certificate programs, disciplines, student populations, and
13 geographic locations.

14 (3) The college board is authorized to receive private, nonstate
15 funding to support the grant program.

16 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 5.** A new section is added to chapter 28B.50
17 RCW to read as follows:

18 (1) The college board shall administer a grant program to support
19 colleges that seek to develop an entire degree or certificate program
20 composed of courses designated as having open educational resources.

21 (2) To be eligible for the grant program, the community or
22 technical college must submit an application to the college board
23 describing its plan to assemble a pathway of courses designated as
24 having open educational resources into a complete degree or
25 certificate program, with the goal that a student could complete the
26 degree or certificate program without having to purchase textbooks or
27 spend a minimal amount on textbooks and other course materials.

28 (3) The college board shall select grant recipients by
29 considering geographic diversity, a variety of academic and workforce
30 credentials and programs, and high-demand programs among students and
31 employers.

32 (4) The college board is authorized to receive private, nonstate
33 funding to support the grant program.

34 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 6.** A new section is added to chapter 28B.77
35 RCW to read as follows:

36 (1) The council shall administer a grant program to fund campus
37 level coordinators to promote and facilitate access to open
38 educational resources for the four-year institutions of higher

1 education. To be eligible for the grant program, a four-year
2 institution of higher education must submit an application to the
3 council along with a pledge of financial or in-kind resources to
4 support the expansion effort. The application must indicate how the
5 four-year institution of higher education will contribute to the goal
6 of expanding access to free or low-cost textbooks and other course
7 materials.

8 (2) The council shall select grant recipients based on the
9 following priorities:

10 (a) Those that project the lowest textbook costs to students;

11 (b) Those that demonstrate the largest reduction in textbook
12 costs to students; and

13 (c) Those that most efficiently and effectively distribute
14 resources across an array of colleges and courses, factoring in
15 course enrollments; different subject matters; required courses for
16 general education requirements; and diversity in class size, degree
17 and certificate programs, disciplines, student populations, and
18 geographic locations.

19 (3) The council is authorized to receive private, nonstate
20 funding to support the grant program.

21 (4) The definitions in section 2 of this act apply to this
22 section.

23 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 7.** A new section is added to chapter 28B.50
24 RCW to read as follows:

25 (1) The college board and the student achievement council shall
26 report to the governor and appropriate fiscal and policy committees
27 of the legislature by December 1, 2018, in accordance with the
28 reporting requirements in RCW 43.01.036, on the impact of the grant
29 programs in sections 4 through 6 of this act, along with
30 recommendations for how to further reduce the cost of textbooks and
31 other course materials for students.

32 (2) This section expires August 1, 2019.

33 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 8.** If specific funding for the purposes of
34 sections 4 through 7 of this act, referencing sections 4 through 7 of
35 this act by bill or chapter number and section number, is not

1 provided by June 30, 2016, in the omnibus appropriations act,
2 sections 4 through 7 of this act are null and void.

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