

HOUSE BILL REPORT

E2SHB 1375

As Passed Legislature

Title: An act relating to providing students with the costs of required course materials.

Brief Description: Providing students at community and technical colleges with the costs of required course materials.

Sponsors: House Committee on Appropriations (originally sponsored by Representatives Van Werven, Tarleton, Orwall, Griffey, Haler, Holy, McCabe, Young, Dent, Riccelli, Bergquist, Buys, Kraft, Kagi, Ryu, Muri, Goodman, Lovick, Frame and Hargrove).

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Higher Education: 1/31/17, 2/14/17 [DPS];
Appropriations: 2/24/17 [DP2S(w/o sub HE)].

Floor Activity:

Passed House: 3/8/17, 97-0.
Passed Senate: 4/6/17, 49-0.
Passed Legislature.

Brief Summary of Engrossed Second Substitute Bill

- Requires the community and technical colleges (CTCs) to provide information on the cost of textbooks and course materials and whether the course uses open educational resources to students during registration by either displaying it in the online course description or by providing a link to the bookstore's website.
- Allows a course's textbooks' and course materials' costs to not be displayed if a faculty member has not been assigned to the course.
- Includes a reporting requirement regarding which courses provided textbook and course material cost information during registration.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION

Majority Report: The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass.
Signed by 8 members: Representatives Hansen, Chair; Pollet, Vice Chair; Holy, Ranking

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.

Minority Member; Van Werven, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Orwall, Sells, Stambaugh and Tarleton.

Staff: Megan Mulvihill (786-7304).

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

Majority Report: The second substitute bill be substituted therefor and the second substitute bill do pass and do not pass the substitute bill by Committee on Higher Education. Signed by 32 members: Representatives Ormsby, Chair; Robinson, Vice Chair; Chandler, Ranking Minority Member; MacEwen, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Stokesbary, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Bergquist, Buys, Caldier, Cody, Condotta, Fitzgibbon, Haler, Hansen, Harris, Hudgins, Jinkins, Kagi, Lytton, Nealey, Pettigrew, Pollet, Sawyer, Schmick, Senn, Springer, Stanford, Sullivan, Taylor, Tharinger, Vick, Volz and Wilcox.

Minority Report: Without recommendation. Signed by 1 member: Representative Manweller.

Staff: Lily Sobolik (786-7157).

Background:

Higher Education Opportunity Act.

The federal government passed the Higher Education Opportunity Act (Act) in 2008, which required institutions of higher education receiving federal assistance to post textbook costs and information on their Internet course schedule, such as the International Student Book Number (ISBN) and retail price. However, if the disclosure is not considered practicable, the institution may state "To be determined." The Act also required the Government Accountability Office (GAO) to study the implementation of this requirement. In a 2013 study, the GAO found that 81 percent of schools sampled provided textbook information online. Washington passed a similar textbook 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 source textbooks when available.

The ctcLink System.

The State Board for Community and Technical Colleges (State Board) has begun implementing a single, centralized software system for each of the 34 community and technical colleges (CTCs) in which students, faculty, and staff will have access to a variety of tools online. The ctcLink system has been implemented at Tacoma Community College, Spokane Falls Community College, and Spokane Community College thus far.

Summary of Engrossed Second Substitute Bill:

To the maximum extent practicable, but no later than the first full quarter after a CTC has implemented the ctcLink system, the CTC must provide information on (a) the cost of any required textbook or other course materials; and (b) whether the course uses open educational resources by displaying the information in the online course description or by providing a link that connects to the bookstore's website or other website. If a faculty member has not yet been assigned to a course, that course's textbooks' and course materials' costs do not have to be displayed. Once the faculty member is assigned, the costs need to be displayed as soon as feasible.

The CTCs are required to report to the State Board on which courses provided textbooks' and course materials' costs to students during registration and what percent of total classes this equaled. The State Board must report the information to the Legislature by January 1 of each biennium, beginning January 1, 2019.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of the session in which the bill is passed. However, the bill is null and void unless funded in the budget.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony (Higher Education):

(In support) Students are focused on the costs of textbooks, and this bill would inform students of the costs at registration. It would help students save money and be able to budget better. It could also decrease the likelihood of students dropping out due to unexpected costs. The CTCs have a nationally recognized OERs library, and it is a student priority to see more OERs used. Students can spend up to \$100 on a single textbook or around \$400 a quarter on textbooks. A suggestion is to denote costs for all types of textbook options, such as new, used, and rental costs as well. Digital options are encouraged, as is accurate and up-to-date textbook pricing. There is a concern regarding the intent section and the stated cost of textbooks. This is inaccurate, as the most recent data shows that students spend on average \$602 a year on textbooks.

(Opposed) None.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony (Appropriations):

(In support) It is reasonable to make sure students are fully aware of textbook costs to help them financially prepare and plan. Financial aid is often not received soon enough to use it to purchase textbooks and course materials, and students end up covering the costs out-of-pocket.

(Opposed) None.

(Other) The bill should move forward, but there is still work that needs to be done regarding the reporting requirement, when materials are made available, and to address when part-time faculty are hired just a couple of weeks before the start of classes.

Persons Testifying (Higher Education): Representative Van Werven, prime sponsor; Jarrett Martin, Whatcom Community College; Brenda Portaro, South Puget Sound Community College; Jessi Bagdasarov, Washington Student Association; Arlen Harris, State Board for Community and Technical Colleges; Melissa Gombosky, Association of American Publishers; and Diana Carlen, RELX Group.

Persons Testifying (Appropriations): (In support) Jessi Bagdasarov, Washington State Association of Students.

(Other) Arlen Harris, State Board for Community and Technical Colleges.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying (Higher Education): None.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying (Appropriations): None.