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**Higher Education & Workforce  
Education Committee**

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**SSB 6699**

**Brief Description:** Concerning cost savings on course materials for students at state universities, regional universities, and The Evergreen State College.

**Sponsors:** Senate Committee on Early Learning, K-12 & Higher Education (originally sponsored by Senators Pridemore, Schmidt, Zarelli, McAuliffe, Spanel and Delvin).

**Brief Summary of Substitute Bill**

- Directs the Boards of Regents or Trustees at the baccalaureate institutions to adopt rules requiring that affiliated bookstores increase cost-saving options to students, and that faculty and staff members consider the least costly practices in assigning course materials.

**Hearing Date:** 2/17/06

**Staff:** Jennifer Thornton (786-7111).

**Background:**

In Washington, according to the Financial Aid Association, books and supplies are budgeted at a total of \$924 for academic year 2005-06. The 2005 College Store Industry Financial Report lists the average price of a new textbook as \$52.36 and the average price of a used textbook as \$40.01. A recent study conducted by the U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO) stated that college textbook prices nearly tripled from December 1986 to December 2004. They 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 "bundling," the addition of supplemental materials, such as CD-ROMs, as the primary reason the cost of textbooks has increased in recent years. Publishers say that they provide these supplemental materials at the request of instructors to enhance student learning. Another factor cited in the study was the frequent revision of textbooks. Publishers report that textbooks are generally revised every three to four years, compared with cycles of four to five years that were standard in the past. Publishers report that frequent revisions are driven by the needs of instructors, who require the most current material reflecting changes in the discipline as well as changes in teaching methods. If a new edition of a book has been released, a student is not likely to be able to receive money in the bookstore buy-back process.

Each of the six public baccalaureate institutions in the state is affiliated with a bookstore. At the University of Washington, the bookstore is incorporated and operated under a Board of Trustees with student and faculty representation. The bookstore at Washington State University is incorporated and contracts with Barnes & Noble College Booksellers to manage its Students Book Corporation stores. The bookstores affiliated with Central Washington University, Eastern Washington University, Western Washington University, and The Evergreen State College are owned by their respective institutions and operate as self-supporting auxiliary enterprises.

**Summary of Bill:**

The Legislature finds that the bundling of texts, workbooks, CD-ROMs, and other course-related materials is often unnecessary and that many faculty and staff select materials uninformed of the retail costs and differences between versions. The Legislature intends to give students more choices for purchasing educational materials and to encourage faculty and staff to work closely with bookstores and publishers to implement the least costly option to students without sacrificing educational content.

The Boards of Regents of the state universities, and the Boards of Trustees of the regional universities and The Evergreen State College, in collaboration with affiliated bookstores and student and faculty representatives, must adopt rules requiring that affiliated bookstores: (1) provide students the option of purchasing unbundled materials when possible; (2) disclose the costs of the materials; (3) disclose how new editions vary from previous editions; and (4) actively promote and publicize book buy-back programs. Rules must also be adopted that require faculty and staff members to consider least costly practices in assigning course materials when educational content is comparable, and to work closely with publishers and local bookstores to create bundles and packages if they deliver cost savings to students.

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Not requested.

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