

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 1375

As Reported by House Committee On: Higher Education

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: 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].

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill

- Requires the community and technical colleges (CTCs) to display required textbooks' and course materials' costs to students in the online course description or provide a link to a bookstore's website that displays the costs for students during the registration process.
- Allows a course's textbooks' and course materials' costs to not be displayed if a faculty member has not been assigned to the course.
- Requires the CTCs to indicate in the online course description if open educational resources are used once the college has implemented the ctcLink system.
- Includes a reporting requirement regarding which courses provided textbook and course material cost information at the beginning of 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 Minority Member; Van Werven, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Orwall, Sells, Stambaugh and Tarleton.

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.

Staff: Megan Mulvihill (786-7304).

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 Substitute Bill:

During the registration process, the CTCs must display the cost of any required textbook or course materials to students in the online course description or provide a link that connects to the bookstore's website, or other website, where students can view the costs. 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 at the beginning of registration and what percent of total classes this equaled. The State Board is required to report this information to the Legislature by January 1 each year, beginning January 1, 2018.

The CTCs must also indicate in the online course catalog whether open educational resources (OERs) are used once the college implements the ctcLink system.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill:

The option for the CTCs to display the textbooks' and course materials' costs by linking to the bookstore's website or other website was added, as was the requirement for CTCs to denote the use of OERs once the college implements the ctcLink system. The substitute bill also allows for an exception for classes that do not yet have a faculty member assigned, and requires the textbooks' and course materials' costs for those classes to be displayed as soon as feasible once the faculty member is assigned.

Language from the intent section regarding the price of textbooks was struck, and the reporting requirement was added.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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

Staff Summary of Public Testimony:

(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.

Persons Testifying: 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 Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.