

PUBLIC COMMENTS

HB 1027

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION

Hearing Date: March 25, 2021 8:00 AM

James (Jim) Camp, MR

W. W. Norton Publishers -Austin Representative

Manchaca, TX

HB 1027 has been filed in the Texas Legislature that, in my opinion, could significantly limit your institution's ability to continue using a textbook affordability program, like Inclusive Access.

Please see the list below enumerating how your institution might be adversely affected if the proposed legislation is enacted into law.

HB 1027 could primarily and potentially:

- * Result in increased costs to students and limits choice for students and limit academic freedom and choice for faculty.

Additionally HB 1027 could potentially:

- Stifle academic freedom and undermine the instructor's rationale behind their course materials selection process and the method in which they want students to access those materials.
- Severely restrict a successful and affordable course materials delivery model fully equipped with instructor support materials and student learning resources such as assessments, quizzes, personalized learning tools, videos, interactive simulations etc. which improve retention and student outcomes.
- Limit student and faculty choice of quality and diverse content developed by top scholars and with input from educators, students and educational institutions.
- Require institutions to change from an opt-out to opt-in process, resulting in a heavy administrative burden to the school and increased costs to students. Data on opt-in programs reported by National Association of College Stores (NACS) show a higher cost to students than traditional opt-out programs. Additional operational processes, enrollment reporting and agreement disclosures are also burdensome to the institution.
- Result in over-regulating institutions of higher education on how they select low-cost course material programs. Significantly changes the structure of how institutional stakeholders made up of administrators, faculty, staff and students collaboratively choose no-cost and low-cost course material programs.
- Conflict with U.S. Department of Education federal regulations, which mandates an opt-out policy, by only allowing opt-in as an option.

HB 1027 specifically would:

- Require the institution to increase tuition, resulting in broader implications on student costs across the institution by including the cost of course materials and enterprise software (i.e. Learning Management Systems, Distance Learning Applications, Remote Proctoring Applications, Virtual Labs, Assessment Software, etc.) in the cost of tuition instead of assessing a separate fee, which is currently the case, ultimately raises the cost for all students.

Lauren Banister

TexPIRG

Austin, TX

POSITION: FAVORABLE

Dear Chair Murphy, Vice Chair Pacheco, and Committee Members,

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TexPIRG is a state based, non-partisan, citizen funded public interest advocacy organization with grassroots members across the state. For forty five years we've stood up to powerful interests whenever they threaten our health and safety, our financial security, or our right to fully participate in our democratic society.

We urge you to support HB1027 to increase textbook transparency for Texas students. Students need access to the full cost and range of choices for classes when financially planning for a semester, including cost related to course materials.

Textbook affordability is a consistent problem for students. In 2016, research from the Student PIRGs found that over \$3 billion in federal financial aid is spent on textbooks every year. And in 2020, our research found that 65% of students have skipped buying textbooks because of their high cost.

If we want a future where financial cost is not a barrier to student success in higher education we must protect students as vulnerable consumers.

Students are smart, and will work to cut costs however they can. Most students already make decisions on which classes to take based on the cost of materials. One out of five students report dropping a class due to the materials cost. Giving students access to course material information when they register for class will allow them time to shop around, find the best deal, and prevent surprise charges on their tuition.

Many automatic textbook billing contracts are unfavorable towards students. They include limits on the number of print copies available, uncapped annual price increases, steep quotas for students enrolled and restrictions on how the school communicates about opting out. Many of these deals fail to fully disclose their discount structure, meaning if a student is automatically opted in it would be difficult to tell if they are getting the best deal.

HB1027 provides students with vital information about their textbook options while they are registering for classes, allowing them to make informed choices and financially plan.

Thank you for introducing this legislation and we urge favorable reports.

Ethan Tobias

TexPIRG

Austin, TX

Dear Chair Murphy, Vice Chair Pacheco, and Committee Members,

I am writing in support of HB 1027. This bill implements common sense transparency measures that allow students to make informed decisions when selecting classes.

Textbooks are one of the highest out of pocket expenses a student will have in a semester. I personally had to find small jobs like running Favor or Uber Eats to cover my textbook costs, I often times didn't even know how much I needed to earn. But knew out of experience and advice from my peers; that I needed at least \$400 to cover textbooks for just ONE semester. The State of Texas shouldn't limit their students and future leaders because they couldn't afford a book.

This is not a problem only I have experienced. Research by U.S PIRG shows that 65% of students have skipped buying a textbook because of cost, even though most were worried it would impact their grade.

By providing clearer labeling for classes that have automatic charges or low cost materials, students can select courses that work for them and their budgets.

I urge you to support HB 1027.