

116TH CONGRESS  
1ST SESSION

**S.** \_\_\_\_\_

To expand the use of open textbooks in order to achieve savings for students and improve textbook price information.

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IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

Mr. DURBIN (for himself, Mr. KING, Ms. SMITH, and Ms. SINEMA) introduced the following bill; which was read twice and referred to the Committee on \_\_\_\_\_

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**A BILL**

To expand the use of open textbooks in order to achieve savings for students and improve textbook price information.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*  
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4 This Act may be cited as the “Affordable College  
5 Textbook Act”.

6 **SEC. 2. FINDINGS.**

7 Congress finds the following:

8 (1) The high cost of college textbooks continues  
9 to be a barrier for many students in achieving high-  
10 er education.

1           (2) According to the College Board, during the  
2           2017–2018 academic year, the average student  
3           budget for college books and supplies at 4-year pub-  
4           lic institutions of higher education was \$1,240.

5           (3) The Government Accountability Office  
6           found that new textbook prices increased 82 percent  
7           between 2002 and 2012 and that although Federal  
8           efforts to increase price transparency have provided  
9           students and families with more and better informa-  
10          tion, more must be done to address rising costs.

11          (4) The growth of the internet has enabled the  
12          creation and sharing of digital content, including  
13          open educational resources that can be freely used  
14          by students, teachers, and members of the public.

15          (5) According to the Student PIRGs, expanded  
16          use of open educational resources has the potential  
17          to save students more than a billion dollars annually.

18          (6) Federal investment in expanding the use of  
19          open educational resources could significantly lower  
20          college textbook costs and reduce financial barriers  
21          to higher education, while making efficient use of  
22          taxpayer funds.

23          (7) Educational materials, including open edu-  
24          cational resources, must be accessible to the widest

1 possible range of individuals, including those with  
2 disabilities.

3 **SEC. 3. OPEN TEXTBOOK GRANT PROGRAM.**

4 (a) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

5 (1) INSTITUTION OF HIGHER EDUCATION.—The  
6 term “institution of higher education” has the  
7 meaning given the term in section 101 of the Higher  
8 Education Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 1001).

9 (2) OPEN EDUCATIONAL RESOURCE.—The term  
10 “open educational resource” has the meaning given  
11 the term in section 133 of the Higher Education Act  
12 of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 1015b).

13 (3) OPEN TEXTBOOK.—The term “open text-  
14 book” means an open educational resource or set of  
15 open educational resources that either is a textbook  
16 or can be used in place of a textbook for a postsec-  
17 ondary course at an institution of higher education.

18 (4) RELEVANT FACULTY.—The term “relevant  
19 faculty” means both tenure track and contingent  
20 faculty members who may be involved in the creation  
21 or use of open textbooks created as part of an appli-  
22 cation under subsection (d).

23 (5) SECRETARY.—The term “Secretary” means  
24 the Secretary of Education.

1           (6) SUPPLEMENTAL MATERIAL.—The term  
2           “supplemental material” has the meaning given the  
3           term in section 133 of the Higher Education Act of  
4           1965 (20 U.S.C. 1015b).

5           (b) GRANTS AUTHORIZED.—From the amounts ap-  
6           propriated under subsection (k), the Secretary shall make  
7           grants, on a competitive basis, to eligible entities to sup-  
8           port projects that expand the use of open textbooks in  
9           order to achieve savings for students while maintaining or  
10          improving instruction and student learning outcomes.

11          (c) ELIGIBLE ENTITY.—In this section, the term “el-  
12          igible entity” means an institution of higher education, a  
13          group of institutions of higher education, or States on be-  
14          half of institutions of higher education.

15          (d) APPLICATIONS.—

16                (1) IN GENERAL.—Each eligible entity desiring  
17                a grant under this section, after consultation with  
18                relevant faculty, shall submit an application to the  
19                Secretary at such time, in such manner, and accom-  
20                panied by such information as the Secretary may  
21                reasonably require.

22                (2) CONTENTS.—Each application submitted  
23                under paragraph (1) shall include a description of  
24                the project to be completed with grant funds and—

1 (A) a plan for promoting and tracking the  
2 use of open textbooks in postsecondary courses  
3 offered by the eligible entity, including an esti-  
4 mate of the projected savings that will be  
5 achieved for students;

6 (B) a plan for evaluating, before creating  
7 new open textbooks, whether existing open text-  
8 books could be used or adapted for the same  
9 purpose;

10 (C) a plan for quality review and review of  
11 accuracy of any open textbooks to be created or  
12 adapted through the grant;

13 (D) a plan for assessing the impact of  
14 open textbooks on instruction and student  
15 learning outcomes at the eligible entity;

16 (E) a plan for disseminating information  
17 about the results of the project to institutions  
18 of higher education outside of the eligible enti-  
19 ty, including promoting the adoption of any  
20 open textbooks created or adapted through the  
21 grant; and

22 (F) a statement on consultation with rel-  
23 evant faculty, including those engaged in the  
24 creation of open textbooks, in the development  
25 of the application.

1 (e) SPECIAL CONSIDERATION.—In awarding grants  
2 under this section, the Secretary shall give special consid-  
3 eration to applications that demonstrate the greatest po-  
4 tential to—

5 (1) achieve the highest level of savings for stu-  
6 dents through sustainable expanded use of open  
7 textbooks in postsecondary courses offered by the el-  
8 igible entity;

9 (2) expand the use of open textbooks at institu-  
10 tions of higher education outside of the eligible enti-  
11 ty; and

12 (3) produce—

13 (A) the highest quality open textbooks;

14 (B) open textbooks that can be most easily  
15 utilized and adapted by faculty members at in-  
16 stitutions of higher education;

17 (C) open textbooks that correspond to the  
18 highest enrollment courses at institutions of  
19 higher education;

20 (D) open textbooks created or adapted in  
21 partnership with entities within institutions of  
22 higher education, including campus bookstores,  
23 that will assist in marketing and distribution of  
24 the open textbook; and

1 (E) open textbooks that are accessible to  
2 students with disabilities.

3 (f) USE OF FUNDS.—An eligible entity that receives  
4 a grant under this section shall use the grant funds to  
5 carry out any of the following activities to expand the use  
6 of open textbooks:

7 (1) Professional development for any faculty  
8 and staff members at institutions of higher edu-  
9 cation, including the search for and review of open  
10 textbooks.

11 (2) Creation or adaptation of open textbooks.

12 (3) Development or improvement of supple-  
13 mental materials and informational resources that  
14 are necessary to support the use of open textbooks,  
15 including accessible instructional materials for stu-  
16 dents with disabilities.

17 (4) Research evaluating the efficacy of the use  
18 of open textbooks for achieving savings for students  
19 and the impact on instruction and student learning  
20 outcomes.

21 (g) LICENSE.—For each open textbook, supplemental  
22 material, or informational resource created or adapted  
23 wholly or in part under this section that constitutes a new  
24 copyrightable work, the eligible entity receiving the grant  
25 shall release such textbook, material, or resource to the

1 public under a non-exclusive, royalty-free, perpetual, and  
2 irrevocable license to exercise any of the rights under copy-  
3 right conditioned only on the requirement that attribution  
4 be given as directed by the copyright owner.

5 (h) ACCESS AND DISTRIBUTION.—The full and com-  
6 plete digital content of each open textbook, supplemental  
7 material, or informational resource created or adapted  
8 wholly or in part under this section shall be made available  
9 free of charge to the public—

10 (1) on an easily accessible and interoperable  
11 website, which shall be identified to the Secretary by  
12 the eligible entity;

13 (2) in a machine readable, digital format that  
14 anyone can directly download, edit with attribution,  
15 and redistribute; and

16 (3) in a format that conforms to accessibility  
17 standards under section 508 of the Rehabilitation  
18 Act of 1973 (29 U.S.C. 794d), where feasible.

19 (i) REPORT.—Upon an eligible entity’s completion of  
20 a project supported under this section, the eligible entity  
21 shall prepare and submit a report to the Secretary regard-  
22 ing—

23 (1) the effectiveness of the project in expanding  
24 the use of open textbooks and in achieving savings  
25 for students;



1           (2) the impact of the project on expanding the  
2 use of open textbooks at institutions of higher edu-  
3 cation outside of the eligible entity;

4           (3) open textbooks, supplemental materials, and  
5 informational resources created or adapted wholly or  
6 in part under the grant, including instructions on  
7 where the public can access each educational re-  
8 source under the terms of subsection (h);

9           (4) the impact of the project on instruction and  
10 student learning outcomes; and

11           (5) all project costs, including the value of any  
12 volunteer labor and institutional capital used for the  
13 project.

14       (j) REPORT TO CONGRESS.—Not later than 2 years  
15 after the date of enactment of this Act, the Secretary shall  
16 prepare and submit a report to the Committee on Health,  
17 Education, Labor, and Pensions of the Senate and the  
18 Committee on Education and Labor of the House of Rep-  
19 resentatives detailing—

20           (1) the open textbooks, supplemental materials,  
21 and informational resources created or adapted  
22 wholly or in part under this section;

23           (2) the adoption of such open textbooks, includ-  
24 ing outside of the eligible entity;

1           (3) the savings generated for students, States,  
2           and the Federal Government through projects sup-  
3           ported under this section; and

4           (4) the impact of projects supported under this  
5           section on instruction and student learning out-  
6           comes.

7           (k) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—There  
8           are authorized to be appropriated to carry out this section  
9           such sums as are necessary.

10 **SEC. 4. TEXTBOOK PRICE INFORMATION.**

11           Section 133 of the Higher Education Act of 1965 (20  
12 U.S.C. 1015b) is amended—

13           (1) in subsection (b)—

14                   (A) by striking paragraph (6) and insert-  
15                   ing the following:

16                   “(6) OPEN EDUCATIONAL RESOURCE.—The  
17                   term ‘open educational resource’ means a teaching,  
18                   learning, or research resource that is offered freely  
19                   to users in at least one form and that resides in the  
20                   public domain or has been released under an open  
21                   copyright license that allows for its free use, reuse,  
22                   modification, and sharing with attribution.”; and

23                   (B) in paragraph (9), by striking “text-  
24                   book that” and all that follows through the pe-  
25                   riod at the end and inserting “textbook that

1 may include printed materials, computer disks,  
2 website access, and electronically distributed  
3 materials.”;

4 (2) in subsection (c)(1)—

5 (A) in the matter preceding subparagraph  
6 (A), by striking “or other person or adopting  
7 entity in charge of selecting course materials”  
8 and inserting “or other person or entity in  
9 charge of selecting or aiding in the discovery  
10 and procurement of course materials”; and

11 (B) by adding at the end the following:

12 “(E) Whether the college textbook or sup-  
13 plemental material is an open educational re-  
14 source.”;

15 (3) in subsection (d)—

16 (A) in the subsection heading, by striking  
17 “ISBN”; and

18 (B) in paragraph (1)—

19 (i) in the matter preceding subpara-  
20 graph (A)—

21 (I) by striking “disclose, on the  
22 institution’s Internet course schedule  
23 and in a manner of the institution’s  
24 choosing, the International Standard  
25 Book Number and retail price infor-



1                   rial, then the institution shall indicate the  
2                   status of such information”;

3                   (4) by striking subsection (e) and inserting the  
4                   following:

5                   “(e) AVAILABILITY OF INFORMATION FOR COLLEGE  
6                   BOOKSTORES.—

7                   “(1) IN GENERAL.—An institution of higher  
8                   education receiving Federal financial assistance shall  
9                   assist a college bookstore that is operated by, or in  
10                  a contractual relationship or otherwise affiliated  
11                  with, the institution, in obtaining required and rec-  
12                  ommended course materials information and such  
13                  course schedule and enrollment information as is  
14                  reasonably required to implement this section so  
15                  that such bookstore may—

16                         “(A) verify availability of such materials;

17                         “(B) source lower cost options, including  
18                         presenting lower cost alternatives to faculty for  
19                         faculty to consider, when practicable; and

20                         “(C) maximize the availability of format  
21                         options for students.

22                   “(2) DUE DATES.—In carrying out paragraph  
23                   (1), an institution of higher education may establish  
24                   due dates for faculty or departments to notify the

1 campus bookstore of required and recommended  
2 course materials.”;

3 (5) in subsection (f)—

4 (A) by redesignating paragraphs (3) and  
5 (4) as paragraphs (4) and (5); and

6 (B) by inserting after paragraph (2) the  
7 following:

8 “(3) available open educational resources;” and

9 (6) by striking subsection (g) and redesignating  
10 subsections (h) and (i) as subsections (g) and (h),  
11 respectively.

12 **SEC. 5. SENSE OF CONGRESS.**

13 It is the sense of Congress that institutions of higher  
14 education should encourage the consideration of open text-  
15 books by faculty within the generally accepted principles  
16 of academic freedom that establishes the right and respon-  
17 sibility of faculty members, individually and collectively,  
18 to select course materials that are pedagogically most ap-  
19 propriate for their classes.

20 **SEC. 6. GAO REPORT.**

21 Not later than 3 years after the date of enactment  
22 of this Act, the Comptroller General of the United States  
23 shall prepare and submit a report to the Committee on  
24 Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions of the Senate and  
25 the Committee on Education and Labor of the House of

1 Representatives on the cost of textbooks to students at  
2 institutions of higher education. The report shall particu-  
3 larly examine—

4           (1) the implementation of section 133 of the  
5 Higher Education Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 1015b),  
6 as amended by section 4, including—

7               (A) the availability of college textbook and  
8 open educational resource information on  
9 course schedules;

10              (B) the compliance of publishers with ap-  
11 plicable requirements under such section; and

12              (C) the costs and benefits to institutions of  
13 higher education and to students;

14           (2) the change in the cost of textbooks;

15           (3) the factors, including open textbooks, that  
16 have contributed to the change of the cost of text-  
17 books;

18           (4) the extent to which open textbooks are used  
19 at institutions of higher education; and

20           (5) how institutions are tracking the impact of  
21 open textbooks on instruction and student learning  
22 outcomes.