

# HB 2919 Hearing for House Committee on Education

Amy Hofer, Coordinator, Statewide Open Education Library Services, Linn-Benton Community College, 2/25/21

Chair Alonso León and members of the committee, my name is Amy Hofer, Coordinator, Statewide Open Education Library Services, Linn-Benton Community College.

HB 2919 would increase transparency for Oregon's college and university students by setting targets for on-time course materials adoption reporting so that students know the total cost of attendance at the time that registration opens. We don't think that students will buy their textbooks immediately when they register, but they will be able to plan ahead and start to budget for the total cost of attendance for the upcoming term.

A report from the Student Public Interest Research Group released yesterday shows that students who lost jobs due to the pandemic or who lacked reliable internet access are hardest hit by course materials costs. This is the right time to provide greater price transparency for students.

Data from the HECC shows that in Oregon, the cost of textbooks is relatively small compared to housing and tuition costs. Yet research shows that what might be considered a minor expense can have an outsized impact on completion. Saving a seemingly small amount of money on textbooks can prevent the kinds of emergencies that arise when you don't have a financial cushion and therefore have an impact on retention. The cost of course materials is especially hard for students to plan ahead for because it varies from one term to the next and the real costs may not be known until the term starts.

Oregon has used legislation to help move the needle on textbook affordability since 2015 when we passed HB 2871, which requires each of Oregon's public colleges and universities to designate courses with no-cost and low-cost course materials in the schedule. But this is a partial solution because we have only partial information about assigned course materials.

Reporting course material selections sooner will have several positive outcomes. Bookstore managers will have more time to manage their inventory, negotiate better deals with publishers, and work with used book sellers to lower costs. Accessibility services staff will have time to make accommodations that may be needed so that students with disabilities don't have to start the term without their materials. Registrars and schedulers will have the information they need to add the no-cost/low-cost designation to the course schedule in order to comply with HB 2871. And students can budget for the real cost of attendance for the upcoming term.

The Oregon Student Association submitted written testimony with an example of how our neighbors in Washington provide this information in the course schedule. Here in Oregon, Chemeketa, Umpqua, and Linn-Benton are statewide leaders with over 90% on-time adoption reporting. We hope that this good work can be replicated statewide so that students can plan ahead for the total cost of attendance.

Thank you, any questions?