



American Council on Education
Office of the President

July 23, 2007

United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator:

I write on behalf of the American Council on Education and the higher education associations listed below to express our strong opposition to an amendment offered today by Senator Durbin to S. 1642, the Higher Education Amendments of 2007, regarding textbooks. Simply put, this amendment would make it harder for campuses to tell students what classes will be offered and for students to plan for and complete their education.

The particular issues our institutions have with this amendment include:

- A federal solution to help curb the cost of textbooks is not warranted and will have unintended consequences, concluded a May 2007 report released by the Advisory Committee on Student Financial Assistance. The committee cautioned that the “the federal approach should be to advance, integrate, and complement the most effective ongoing state and college initiatives, not to choose one over another, or to replace them with federal ones.” The report also included a number of recommendations to address the cost of textbooks
- This amendment will not achieve its intended result of helping students obtain cheaper textbooks or choose less expensive courses. Course schedules often are published months before faculty is hired. Since faculty determine the course content and textbook selection, publishing textbook information in conjunction with course schedules often is not possible.
- ISBN numbers are no longer a good indicator for textbooks. The same textbook can have several different ISBN numbers, depending on whether the publishers bundles, customizes or reprints editions. If institutions are forced to publish this information early in a course catalogue, before the bookstore has time to verify the information work with the faculty to ensure they will use all the material they have adopted, it can cause students to purchase the wrong books, or to purchase more expensive versions of books that might otherwise be available unbundled or used.

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The higher education community is working with Congress to address issues surrounding college affordability and appreciates the Senate's efforts in this regard. However, this amendment would make it more difficult for all students to complete their college education. We therefore ask that you oppose this amendment when it comes up for a vote.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "David Ward", written in a cursive style.

David Ward
President

DW/jsf

On behalf of:

American Association of Community Colleges
American Association of State Colleges and Universities
American Council on Education
Association of American Universities
Association of Jesuit Colleges and Universities
EDUCAUSE
National Association of College Stores
National Association of Independent Colleges and Universities
National Association of State Universities and Land-Grant Colleges