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Ohio Bill Would Restrict Faculty Choice, Drive up Textbook Costs
Publishers testify on bill that would limit use of college textbooks

Washington, D.C.—The Ohio State Senate Committee on Education today held a hearing on Senate Bill 151, legislation aimed at regulating the college textbook market. Bruce Hildebrand, Executive Director for Higher Education for the Association of American Publishers (AAP), issued a statement on the negative effects this bill would have on textbook prices, options and student success. Mr. Hildebrand said:

“AAP and its members understand the goals of SB 151, but it is, unfortunately, yet another attempt to regulate the textbook market and, ultimately, publisher practices at the expense of faculty choice, academic freedom and student success. Similar legislation has been peddled across the country—calling for transparency and regulations—but without success. If passed, SB 151 and legislation like it would restrict access to necessary learning materials and increase textbook prices for students who are already struggling to meet the growing cost of college.

“Publishers already go to great lengths to ensure faculty have easy access to price and product information through their marketing representatives and online. Armed with a textbook’s ISBN (International Standard Book Number) or, simply, a text’s title and author, students or parents can do a quick Internet search that will bring up hundreds of sources listing price and product information. Yet, this bill calls for duplicating these efforts, which would only serve to add costs to the system and drive up the price of textbooks.

“SB 151 also seeks to limit faculty choice by preventing state institutions of higher education from using textbooks or supplemental materials that do not meet the disclosure requirements mandated by the bill. This would mean that if just one textbook is found in violation, the colleges and universities in Ohio would be unable to use any materials produced by that publisher.

“Prohibiting the use of certain course materials would severely limit the educational opportunities of Ohio’s college students. Publishers work side-by-side with faculty members to find the classroom materials that faculty believe are best suited for their students’ capabilities, learning and classroom success and to develop supplemental materials to help students learn course material in the best manner possible. According to a nationwide Zogby survey, 84 percent of college instructors believe students need a textbook to pass their course and, 86 percent require or recommend supplementary materials to better ensure student success.

“Publishers, faculty, parents and institutions all share the same goal—to help students succeed. Preventing any of these stakeholders from accomplishing this goal would only serve to undermine the educational goals of Ohio’s college students.”

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The Association of American Publishers (AAP) and its member publishers understand college students' concerns about the cost of college, including textbook costs – and publishers have responded to these concerns by increasing both the number of lower-cost options available to faculty and students and the kinds of materials available, such as custom textbooks and course materials and e-books. More facts are available at www.textbookfacts.org.