

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

April 13, 2023

The Honorable Tammy Baldwin  
Chair  
Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on  
Labor, Health and Human Services,  
Education, and Related Agencies  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Shelley Moore Capito  
Ranking Member  
Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on  
Labor, Health and Human Services,  
Education, and Related Agencies  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chair Baldwin and Ranking Member Capito:

Thank you for your continued support of the Open Textbook Pilot (Pilot) at the Department of Education (ED). The Pilot funds the creation and expansion of quality open college textbooks—educational resources freely available to the public under an open license—and decreases higher education costs for students. The \$12 million included in the Fiscal Year (FY) 2023 omnibus brings the total federal investment in the Pilot to \$47 million over the last six fiscal years. It is estimated that the projects supported to date will result in more than \$250 million in eventual savings to students—a substantial return on federal investment. We write to ask that you continue to build on this multi-year, bipartisan investment by providing \$25 million to support the Pilot in FY 2024.

Textbook costs are one of the most overlooked costs of attending college; however, they can be substantial and create an unnecessary barrier to college completion. Unlike tuition and other costs of college, textbook costs often are felt by students on the front end. The College Board estimates that the average student at a four-year public institution of higher education spent \$1,240 on college books and supplies during the 2022-2023 academic year. According to a 2015 survey by U.S. PIRG, students annually spend more than \$3 billion in financial aid dollars on course materials.

Open textbooks provide quality, cost-effective alternatives to traditional textbooks and can improve educational outcomes by ensuring students are not forced to forgo required course materials. A 2014 U.S. PIRG report found that 65 percent of students decided not to buy a textbook because of the cost, and 94 percent of those students were worried it would affect their grade negatively. Each time a faculty member substitutes a traditional textbook with an open textbook, students save money. Open textbooks also can improve instruction by providing greater flexibility for faculty members to adapt and customize materials to meet their specific needs. Over time, the expanded use of open textbooks has the potential to inject healthy competition into the traditional textbook market and bring prices down.

There is growing demand among the higher education community for the Open Textbook Pilot. Over the course of the Pilot, ED has received 69 applications for projects while only

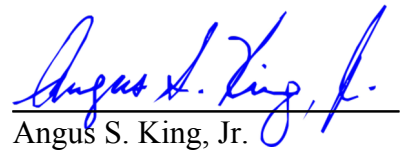
having the resources to fund 18—leaving 74 percent of proposals unfunded. Increasing funding to \$25 million in FY 2024 will keep up the momentum toward lowering the cost of higher education, providing financial support for more projects, and increasing savings for students. Previous federal investments in the Open Textbook Pilot demonstrate a bipartisan commitment to making college more affordable for students and families. We urge you to grow this commitment in FY 2024.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Richard J. Durbin  
United States Senator



Angus S. King, Jr.  
United States Senator



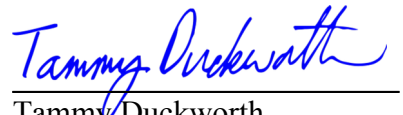
Tina Smith  
United States Senator



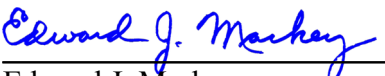
Kyrsten Sinema  
United States Senator



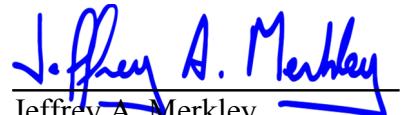
Thomas R. Carper  
United States Senator



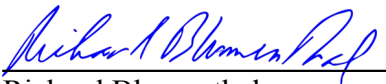
Tammy Duckworth  
United States Senator



Edward J. Markey  
United States Senator



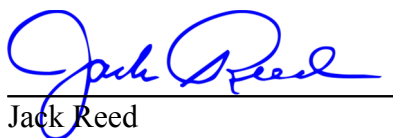
Jeffrey A. Merkley  
United States Senator



Richard Blumenthal  
United States Senator



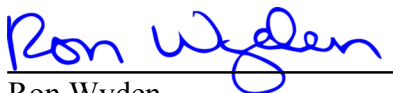
Christopher S. Murphy  
United States Senator



Jack Reed  
United States Senator



Mazie K. Hirono  
United States Senator



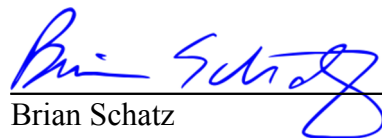
Ron Wyden  
United States Senator



Sherrod Brown  
United States Senator




Maria Cantwell  
United States Senator



Brian Schatz  
United States Senator



Alex Padilla  
United States Senator



Margaret Wood Hassan  
United States Senator



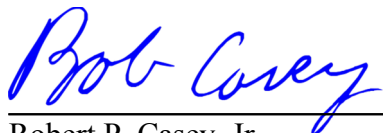
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Dianne Feinstein  
United States Senator



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Raphael Warnock  
United States Senator



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Robert P. Casey, Jr.  
United States Senator



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Benjamin L. Cardin  
United States Senator



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Amy Klobuchar  
United States Senator



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Martin Heinrich  
United States Senator



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Chris Van Hollen  
United States Senator



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Peter Welch  
United States Senator



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Cory A. Booker  
United States Senator