

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

December 14, 2023

The Honorable Miguel Cardona
Secretary
U.S. Department of Education
400 Maryland Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20202

The Honorable Shalanda D. Young
Director
Office of Management and Budget
725 17th Street, NW
Washington, DC 20503

Dear Secretary Cardona and Director Young:

We write to request that you include robust funding for the Open Textbooks Pilot (Pilot) in the Administration's Fiscal Year (FY) 2025 budget request.

As the cost of college continues to rise, it is crucial to ensure college is affordable for all students. With a single textbook potentially costing hundreds of dollars, textbook costs, unlike tuition and other college costs, are often overlooked. However, they can create an unnecessary barrier to attaining a college education. According to the College Board, the average student at a four-year public college spends approximately \$1,240 on books and supplies. According to a 2020 survey by U.S. PIRG, 65 percent of students skipped buying a textbook because of the cost, and 90 percent of those students were worried it would affect their grade negatively. The high cost of textbooks disproportionately impacts low-income students and students of color who are unable to purchase required course materials, placing them at an academic disadvantage.

Open textbooks—education resources that are licensed under an open license and made available free of charge to the public—offer quality, cost-effective alternatives to traditional textbooks. When open textbooks are used, students save money. Further, faculty members have greater flexibility to adapt and customize materials to meet their specific needs. The expanded use of open textbooks also has the potential to promote healthy competition in the traditional textbook market, which would reduce prices overall.

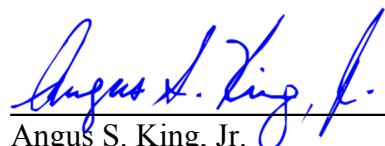
Colleges and universities increasingly are seeking to utilize open textbooks programs, such as those supported by the Pilot. Since the creation of the Pilot in FY 2018, the Department of Education has received 69 applications for projects while only being able to fund 18 projects. Further, programs supported by the Pilot are estimated to have saved students \$250 million. Additional funding would increase these savings for students.

We urge you to continue to work to make college affordable for students by including robust funding for the Pilot in the Administration's FY 2025 budget request. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Richard J. Durbin
United States Senator



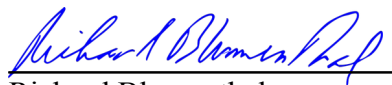
Angus S. King, Jr.
United States Senator



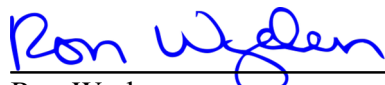
Tina Smith
United States Senator



Tammy Duckworth
United States Senator



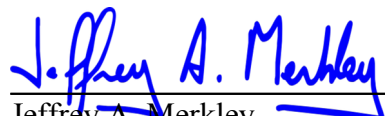
Richard Blumenthal
United States Senator



Ron Wyden
United States Senator



Mazie K. Hirono
United States Senator



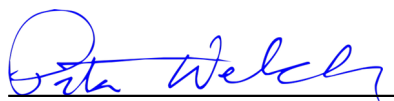
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Peter Welch
United States Senator



Alex Padilla
United States Senator



Benjamin L. Cardin
United States Senator