



Statement of
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To the Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee
Connecticut General Assembly

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Mr. Chairman, members of the Committee, thank you for this opportunity to comment on Proposed Bill No. 6117, introduced by Representative Haddad.

I am David Anderson and I am the Executive Director for Higher Education at the Association of American Publishers.

The Association is a nationwide organization. Its membership includes virtually every major publisher and many small publishers ranging from Harlequin Romance to Princeton University Press. As the Executive Director for Higher Education, I work with our members who publish coursework materials for colleges, universities and community colleges.

I would like to compliment Representative Haddad for raising a very important topic. While I have some very substantial reservations about Proposed Bill No. 6117, his introduction of the bill provides the occasion for a timely conversation about an aspect of higher education which is little discussed and often misunderstood.

Proposed Bill No. 6117 establishes a consortium of public institutions of higher education to (1) assess the use of high-quality and affordable digital open-source textbooks and related materials to lower the costs of higher education for students, (2) promote the use of and access to such textbooks, and (3) collaborate for purposes of developing more of such textbooks.

From the perspective of the members of my association, we do not believe that educators are faced with an "either/or" question of whether to use open educational resources (OER) or the learning materials we publish. Rather, from our perspective, it is a "both/and" proposition.

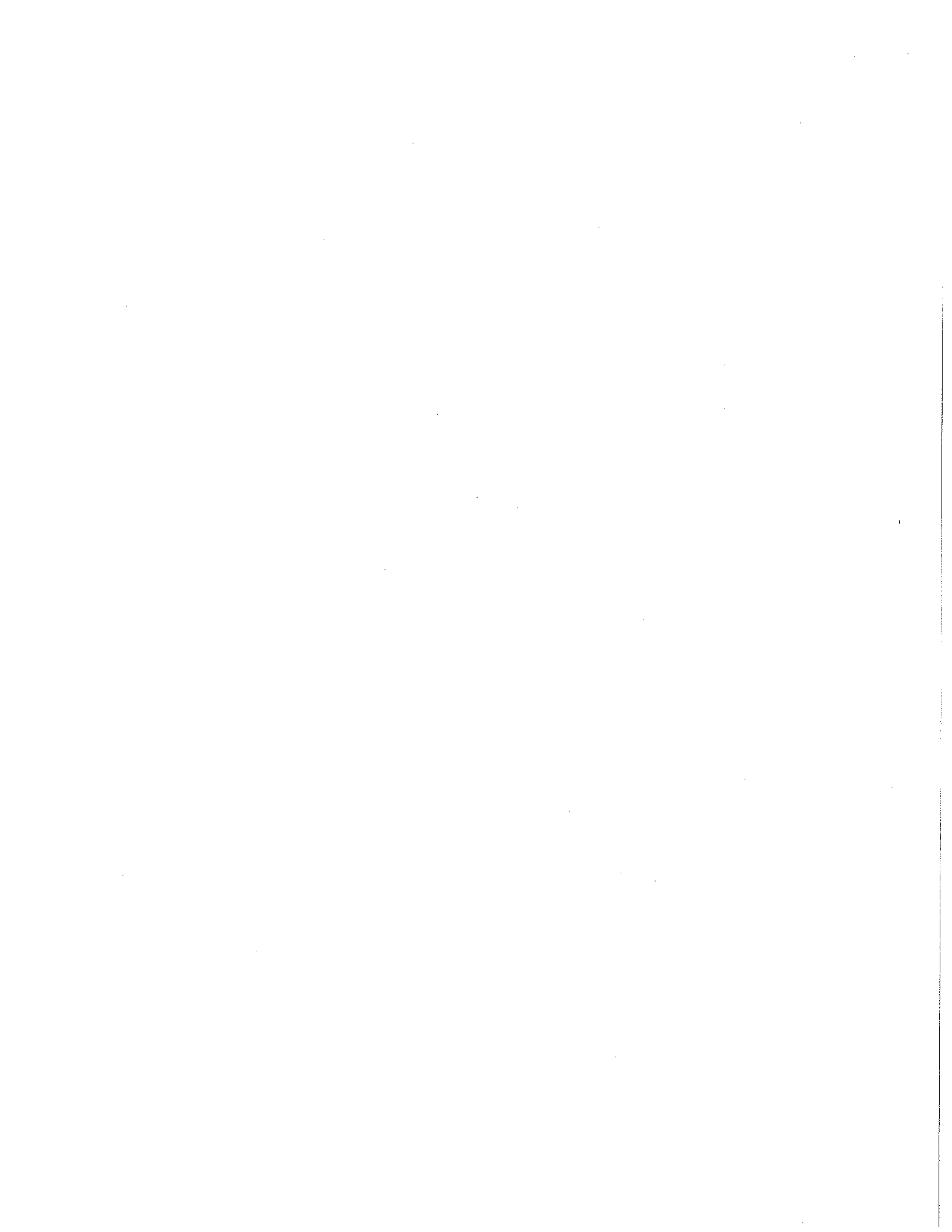
We do, however, object to government using taxpayer funds to favor one set of participants in what is a very robust and competitive marketplace. As I detail below, there is already a massive amount of OER material currently available. There is no need for government at any level to subsidize the creation of more. In its current form, Proposed Bill 6117 does not appear to contemplate public funding of OER.

However, if Connecticut does go forward in creating a consortium to assess the use of open source materials, excluding from consideration by the consortium the digital course materials and digital learning platforms which my members publish not only distorts the marketplace, it ultimately harms the very people you are trying to help: faculty who are developing or using OER.

Our digital learning materials, whether used on their own or in combination with OER, have been shown to both dramatically lower student costs, lower institutional costs and increase student success.

I would like to provide you with some examples of what I am talking about.

In 2012 one of my members published a digital learning platform which, among other things, helps faculty to find an individual piece of OER and assess its quality. On its release, that digital platform contained a library of 680,000 individual pieces of OER. Clearly there is no shortage of OER on the market.



However, if you do go forward to establish the consortium, would it not make sense for participants to be able to consider including in their project a digital platform such as the one I just described? I would think that in deciding whether to develop a piece of OER one would want to know whether it already exists and, if it does, what would constitute an improvement. The digital platform I described helps OER developers to answer those questions.

A second example comes from a different publisher that was partnering with a community college. The community college had a problem common to many: students needing remedial help in algebra. These students often needed two sequential remedial courses before they were ready to enter the associate's degree program – effectively converting a four semester program into a six semester program, a significant increase in the time commitment and the cost to the student.

The publisher in question had a digital learning platform that, among other things, contained both a diagnostic tool to assess with great accuracy what a student already knows and personalized learning technologies – that is, quizzes and tests employing artificial intelligence so that as the student takes the quiz, the quiz is assessing the student and drilling him or her on the areas that need more work. The faculty had developed a textbook that was a hybrid of the material covered in both of their remedial courses.

Working in partnership, the publisher and the college were able to combine two remedial classes into one class where students were able to earn three degree credits and one non-degree credit – a substantial savings of time and money for both the students and the college. The digital diagnostic tool identified what students needed to learn on an individual basis and the personalized learning quizzes better enabled them to master the subject. The faculty developed materials were closely matched to what the students required. The success rates for students also jumped from about 50 to 60 percent to 72 to 85 percent depending on the campus. Again, if you go forward to establish the consortium, partnering of the type I just described should be eligible for its consideration.

Another publisher is in the process of developing a digital learning platform of a type I will describe in a moment. They are partnering with Openstax, an open source textbook publisher affiliated with Rice University.

Openstax is a good example of an open source publisher flourishing in the marketplace without government assistance. It has published fourteen textbooks with a development cost of \$500,000 per textbook (according to their own press releases). Openstax has raised those funds through private, not government, sources. Again, to my mind this raises a question of whether government should be subsidizing such activity. But, again, if you do go forward with a grant program, I would think that collaborations such as this one should be eligible for consideration.

Finally, in an independent study of one of our publishers, use of its digital platform in six separate courses improved student performance in each course and reduced institutional costs between 10 and 35 percent.

I do not mention these examples in an effort to convince you that Connecticut needs these items on its campuses. I mention them to give you a sense of what higher education publishers and digital learning companies are doing, how they collaborate with OER developers, and how leaving them out of the equation is both unfair and counterproductive to the goals you are seeking to achieve.

As it has done in so many different industries, digital technology is revolutionizing higher education publishing. Over the last ten years, publishers have developed a new generation of digital learning platforms that reduce costs and address the needs of both students and faculty.

These platforms can be used on virtually any device: a laptop, tablet or smartphone. They include an embedded textbook or can be bundled with a hardcopy textbook. They are designed to be customized by faculty to include OER and other materials. Perhaps most importantly, these platforms include the personalized learning technologies that have done so much to improve student performance.

Faculty teaching general education classes with as many or more than 200 students now have the ability to provide individual attention to students that was simply impossible to do in the past.



Also important, these digital learning platforms typically cost about half of what a color, hardbound textbook costs. I have seen cost reductions as great as 65 percent.

To give one last example, an independent study of more than 700 students at six distinct institutions found use of a specific digital learning platform increased student performance by a full letter grade. Community college students saw their graduation rates increase by 12.5 percent and their retention rates increase by 10.5 percent.

Again, while I do not believe that it is necessary or advisable for you to create an open source consortium, if you do create such a group, these digital learning platforms should be eligible for its consideration.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide these comments.

