



Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee

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Testimony

By

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Members of the Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee, thank you for the opportunity to comment on Raised Bill S.B. No. 931, *An Act Concerning Requirements for College Textbooks*.

My name is Martha Bedard and I am the Vice Provost for Libraries at the University of Connecticut. I speak for myself and the University Libraries when I say that we are deeply committed to providing the resources necessary for all students to fulfill their academic and research needs. As an academic research librarian I have been involved in the Open Access movement for at least a decade, and am currently chairing a University of Connecticut wide effort to investigate and pursue open, freely available textbooks and other educational resources. I believe that creating affordable textbooks along with the incentives to use open source textbooks to further decrease the costs of education are important initiatives.

Because of our professional commitment to providing access to resources without barriers, the UConn Libraries is supportive of strengthening laws that spur the development and adoption of affordable textbooks. We work at promoting an awareness of, and accountability for enforcing existing laws, both the federal Higher Education Opportunities Act (HEOA) Textbook Provisions and CT State laws that address textbooks. For example, I fully support H.B.6117 - AN ACT CONCERNING THE USE OF DIGITAL OPEN-SOURCE TEXTBOOKS IN HIGHER EDUCATION currently sponsored by Representatives Haddad and Flexer.

The concern we have with S.B. No. 931 is the three year time frame without regard to subject matter. Instead of moving a new bill forward we would like to advocate for content changes to an existing CT State law, modeled after federal legislation, to provide greater strength. The existing law with potential for additional language is CT Gen Stat § 10a-44a. Specifically, Sec. 6. of 10a-44a of the general statutes could mirror the language found in HEOA, Sec. 113, subsection c.1.c to include

language that requires proof of substantial revisions to new textbook editions, regardless of the time that has elapsed since previous editions. In some emerging fields it is conceivable that there would be substantial changes in less than three years that would benefit student learning, and in other cases there may not be substantive changes in the past three years. Amending the language to include that, and further defining the term substantial would be far more beneficial for both students and faculty.

The specific section we are referring to reads as follows:

Each publisher of college textbooks shall make available to a prospective purchaser of [their] the publisher's products who is a member of the faculty of an institution of higher education (1) the price at which the publisher would make the products available to the store on the campus of such institution that would offer such products to students, and **(2) the history of revisions for such products, if any.** For purposes of this section, "products" means all versions of a textbook or set of textbooks, except custom textbooks or special editions of textbooks, available in the subject area for which a prospective purchaser is teaching a course, including supplemental items, both when sold together or separately from a textbook.

It is for these reasons that while we fully support the need to address changes to the textbook selection process such as H.B. 6117, we do not support S.B.931. We respectfully request that the issue be taken up under existing law.

I would be pleased to discuss the changes I have suggested further if there is interest. Thank you again for your time and consideration.