



Written Testimony of Saman Azimi
ConnPIRG Students
University of Connecticut
In support of HB 7235:

An Act Concerning the Recommendations of the Open Educational Resources Task Force

Members of the Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee, thank you for the opportunity to voice my support for H.B.7235: *AN ACT CONCERNING THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE OPEN EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES TASK FORCE*.

My name is Saman Azimi. I am a senior finance major at the University of Connecticut and the Chair of the Board of ConnPIRG Students, a statewide nonprofit organization dedicated to fighting powerful special interests and protecting consumers.

As a student at an institute of higher education, I have felt the acute impact of the high cost of textbooks. I have been forced by a broken market – one in which the student consumer has no choice in the product they buy – to purchase textbooks that are more than \$250. I have been forced to suffer an even more odious educational obstacle: access codes, which are publishing companies’ response to the burgeoning used textbook market and an all too common occurrence in classrooms, presenting exorbitant costs to students for a single semester’s access to materials.

As a ConnPIRG student leader, I had the opportunity to spearhead the student activism that culminated in the creation of a university committee dedicated to promulgating the use of open educational resources, which present an effective, high-quality market solution to the cost barrier that traditional textbooks pose to students. The committee has been a tremendous success, generating projected savings of over \$1 million per year for students. To put into perspective the substantial impact of the program, the first funding that the committee received was actually a \$26,000 investment from the Student Government, which was put towards the creation, start-to-finish, of a chemistry textbook that would fit UConn’s curriculum. That textbook is now used for three large general chemistry classes, each one routinely seeing over three-hundred students enrolled. With that in mind, the cost savings are staggering.

I also had the privilege of being a student member of the Connecticut Legislative Task Force to Study Best Practices with regard to Open Educational Resources, enabled by Special Act 15-18 - *AN ACT CONCERNING THE USE OF DIGITAL OPEN-SOURCE TEXTBOOKS IN HIGHER EDUCATION* sponsored by Representative Haddad and Senator Flexer. I’m thrilled to see a follow-up to the recommendations of the committee. Creating a council that would conduct many of the same functions at a larger level that the UConn committee does, like identifying

high-impact courses for which to develop OER, establishing a grant program for faculty, and promoting strategies for the expansion of OER use, would be a significant step forward for the state in terms of fighting the burgeoning cost of higher education and allowing students access to all of the institutions of higher education that CT offers. As evidenced by the microcosm of the UConn program, a small investment would yield prodigious returns for students and show a robust commitment to our future.

In conclusion, I want to encourage the committee to support the passage of HB 7325, which will ultimately support students' access to the higher education that they deserve.

UConnPIRG is a chapter of ConnPIRG Students, a statewide, student funded, student run nonprofit organization dedicated to a twofold mission of fighting powerful special interests and empowering students to take action.