

Julia Dennen
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Proponent Testimony on HB 337

Chairman Schaffer, Vice Chair Scherer, Ranking Member Rogers and members of the House Ways and Means Committee, I would first like to thank you for opportunity to speak with you today about House Bill 337. My name is Julia Dennen, and it is truly my honor and pleasure to be here today. I am currently a second-year student at The Ohio State University studying Public Policy and Management in the John Glenn College of Public Affairs, and I have the extraordinary honor to represent the college in the Undergraduate General Assembly, as well as serve as the Deputy Director of Governmental Relations in the Undergraduate Student Government- or USG.

While I have found my home here in Columbus, I am originally from the Northern Suburbs of Chicago, IL and made the decision to attend Ohio State for its extraordinary program for Public Affairs and Public Policy. From my first visit, I knew I had found where I was meant to be. However, as an out of state student, my tuition and fees are 50% higher than in state students. Despite my GPA, ACT, and extra-curricular activities in high school, I was not awarded scholarships to Ohio State because of when I applied. I am personally financially responsible for my college education, and at the age of 19, already have over \$35,000 in private student loan debt, and spend my summers and school years working multiple jobs on top of my academic and extracurricular commitments. Every semester when I see my statement of account, I get an inevitable wave of dread mixed with panic. \$20,231.34. That is a lot of money for anyone, let alone a nineteen-year-old. Now, I am not sharing this information with you to incite pity or sympathy, but rather to shed light on the importance of passing House Bill 337.

I appreciate the situation I am in, as I believe it has made me a better student, a better worker, and helped me to understand the magnitude of the importance of education. With that being said, any financial aid that is offered and any financial hindrance that is lifted that is from students- especially those like me- is for lack of a better term, a “God send”. With the passage of HB 337 and the tax exemption of post-secondary textbooks, I would be able to save on average \$80 a semester, which can then be reallocated into other more productive areas of my education.

As you may imagine, I am quite the policy fiend, and upon reading HB 337 I was immediately invested. For the past year and half the Undergraduate Student Government has been focusing on college affordability largely through the lens of textbook affordability. The work my good friend, and the Director of Academic Affairs, Kate Greer, has done is monumental and will save students millions of dollars a year. This passage of this bill is another opportunity to do just that. Working with other student senators I authored the Resolution 50-R-16: A Resolution to Support Textbook Affordability by Encouraging a State and Local Tax Exemption on Post-Secondary Textbooks. The resolution outlines the necessity of improving college affordability, and the work USG have already done to address textbook accessibility and affordability as well as the importance of supporting the passage of HB 337. The resolution passed with unanimous consent, carrying the weight, voice, and approval of all 52, 517 undergraduate students at The Ohio State University. The resolution also passed through the University Senate, gaining the approval of the entirety of the University, including faculty, staff, administration and President Drake. As the Deputy Director of Governmental Relations in USG, I can assure you that this bill is not only helpful for students, but reflects their political views and desires.

I want to thank you once again for inviting me here to today, and for listening to my story, and moreover, to the stories of students across our University. I have brought copies of the Undergraduate Student Government Resolution for you to review if you wish, and once again, thank you for your time.