

Testimony on House Bill 49

Ohio House of Representatives Finance Committee - Subcommittee on Higher Education

<http://www.ohiohouse.gov/committee/finance-subcommittee-on-higher-education>

Representative Rick Perales, Chair

Representative Dan Ramos, Ranking Minority member

Bennet Givens, Associate Professor, Ohio State University

Member, Ohio Faculty Council

Chairman Perales, Ranking Member Ramos, and members of the committee:

My name is Ben Givens, and I am an associate professor of Psychology at The Ohio State University, and Chair of the Ohio State Faculty Council. I am before you today to testify on the state operating budget, HB 49, in my role as a member of the Ohio Faculty Council.

As noted by my colleague Dr. Dan Crane, the Ohio Faculty Council respectfully requests the removal of the textbook provision from HB 49. With the budget's freeze on tuition and fees and a less than inflationary increase proposed to the state share of instruction (SSI), the effect of this proposal as written would require public colleges and universities to shift resources from other areas to cover the cost of textbooks. We would prefer to work with the General Assembly to reduce student textbook costs in other ways.

As you are aware, the Governor's Task Force on Affordability and Efficiency in Higher Education was released in October of 2015. <https://www.ohiohighered.org/affordability-efficiency/task-force>. The report provided recommendations on textbook affordability: engage professional negotiators to help faculty obtain the best deals on textbooks, standardize materials for gateway courses, and develop digital capabilities. At my institution, we are utilizing these recommendations and taking other steps to make textbooks more affordable.

Though more work needs to be done, Ohio State University has made great strides in textbook affordability.

- OSU is a founding member of the Unizen Consortium, a nationwide collaboration of colleges and universities focused on providing digital teaching and learning resources with the intent of delivering course materials more affordably. Unizen has programs that have led to innovations in course delivery strategies that make course materials available easily across multiple platforms. Ohio State through Unizen and the Big Ten Academic Alliance have initiated an effort to generate affordable electronic test banks that will be available to instructors and not require students to get individual access keys. <http://unizin.org/consortium/members/>
- The Affordable Learning Exchange (ALX) at OSU makes grants available to faculty to replace textbooks with open source and more affordable materials. The attention to the course design results in improvements not only in the affordability of the course materials, but also in the quality of the course itself and the student

experience. Overall these grants have produced significant savings for students and there are plans to expand this program. <https://affordablelearning.osu.edu/>

- OSU Libraries partner with OhioLINK giving student access to resources at no cost. <https://www.ohiolink.edu/> Additionally, the OSU library system maintains textbooks on reserve for nearly 1,000 courses. <https://library.osu.edu/projects-initiatives/affordability/textbooks-on-reserve/>
- OSU is part of the Open Textbook Network that provides resources for free download or low-cost printing. OSU faculty have authored and made available textbooks for this program. <http://open.umn.edu/opentextbooks/>
- One step toward making textbooks more affordable is for textbook orders to be submitted early during the previous semester, so that the bookstore can buy back books that will be used again and will have a longer lead time to secure lower cost materials. I co-sponsored a resolution with our Undergraduate Student Government that was approved by our University Senate two weeks ago to incentivize departments and colleges to place timely book orders. The resolution also charged the senate subcommittee on distance education and library information technology to study additional measures and policies to address textbook affordability and to produce a report for autumn semester 2017. <http://senate.osu.edu/materials/senate/2017-03-09/RevisedUSGTextbookOrderingWhereas.pdf>

The faculty at the Ohio State University through the Ohio Faculty Council are committed to working with policymakers on the effort to reduce student textbook costs, but the result should not negatively affect the quality of the learning materials nor other academic areas where resources would need to be reduced to pay for the current proposal.