

James R Curlis
Student Government Association
Wright State University
Cell: (937) 710-5849
Email: curlis.6@wright.edu

Honorable Tim Schaffer
Chair, Ohio House of Representatives Ways and Means Committee
77 S. High St Columbus, OH 43215

Chairman Schaffer, Vice Chair Scherer, Ranking Member Rodgers, and members of the Ohio House of Representatives Ways and Means Committee.

Good morning, I am very thankful and humbled to be speaking before you today. I am blessed to be representing not only my school, but also on the behalf of the students in Ohio's University System. I have the honor to speak in support of House Bill 337 before you all and do implore you to pass this bill through your committee today.

First and foremost, I'd like to introduce myself. My name is James Curlis. I am currently a freshman enrolled at Wright State University as an economics major with aspirations of pursuing a constitutional law degree afterward graduation. I am involved in Wright State's Student Government, working apart of the student affairs and lobbying committees respectfully. I have testified before the House Ways and Means Committee previously on behalf of House Bill 337.

The pressure of financial stress on education has really effect Ohio. A recent report issued for the non-profit group, Philanthropy Ohio, found that Ohio is ranked as one of the bottom five states in college affordability, with only four out of ten Ohioans having a post-secondary degree.¹ Ohio averages 19 undergraduate completions per 100 FTE, or fulltime students, ranking 38th in the nation amongst the states.² If the number of college educated and skilled workers continue to decrease, the state's economy will begin to follow and suffer according to the author of the report and William Doyle of Vanderbilt University.

The state's has previously mentioned a goal to have 65% of Ohioans with a degree or certificate of higher education within the next eight years, but with the trends shown we will fall short of our expectations. Our state will fall short of promises and optimism for a bright future unless something can be done to help bridge the gap and help encourage the citizens and young people of Ohio to continue to go to school and get a higher degree of education give themselves and our communities better opportunities through higher education.

If passed and enacted, House Bill 337 will provide financial relief to students statewide. Making college textbooks tax exempt would benefit student's by helping them save roughly \$27 million annually, as students currently spend between \$455 million and \$563 million on textbooks in

¹ Report Ranks Ohio Fifth Worst in US For College Affordability
<http://radio.wosu.org/post/report-ranks-ohio-fifth-worst-us-college-affordability#stream/0>

² Ohio Public Colleges (4-year)
http://collegecompletion.chronicle.com/state/#state=oh§or=public_four

Ohio annually, with number most likely to increase in the upcoming years.³ The loss of tax dollars from the exemption would be roughly \$27 million.⁴ The tax break though would provide students more cash in their pockets and could help the state attain the goal of raising the education level and skillset of Ohioans that can will boost the state's economy.

This bill has generated interest from both students and administration. The Wright State Board of Trustees and Faculty Senate and are in support of this bill, as well as the Ohio State University's Faculty Senate. The Student Governments from Cleveland State University, Wright State University, and Ohio State University have passed resolutions in support of making college textbooks tax-exempt. The Ohio Faculty Senate and Faculty Congress of Ohio have also lent their support for this bill to be passed. A petition was sent calling for support for the bill and it currently has over 1,300 signatures from students.⁵

Members from Wright State and other universities state wide have fought hard to help make college more affordable for students. The work done by the students and the Representatives of Ohio to help make the opportunity of a higher education more affordable has been extraordinary to witness and be a part of, and I ask you to consider the work and enthusiasm displayed by those who have worked hard seeking this bill to pass.

Before I leave I'd like to share with you a couple quotes from some of our nation's Founding Fathers. President John Adams once said "let us tenderly and kindly cherish, therefore, the means of knowledge"⁶, and Dr. Benjamin Franklin said "an investment in knowledge pays the best interest"⁷. I see great value in proper, higher education, and I encourage you to vote in favor of this bill to help make a positive impact for millions of young Ohioans.

Chairman Schaffer, Vice Chair Scherer, Ranking Members Rodgers, and the members of the Ohio House of Representatives Ways and Means Committee, I thank you all for your time and consideration, and for allowing me the opportunity to speak before you all on this bill. I welcome any questions, comments, or concerns at this time.

³ Principal Economist Jean J. Botomogno, Ohio Legislative Service Commission.

⁴ Fiscal Note and Local Impact Statement, House Bill 337: Jean J Botomogno, Ohio Legislative Service Commission
<https://www.legislature.ohio.gov/legislation/legislation-summary?id=GA132-HB-337>

⁵ Pass House Bill 337: Sales Tax Exemption of College Textbooks
<https://www.change.org/p/ohio-state-house-of-representatives-pass-house-bill-337-sales-tax-exemption-of-college-textbooks>

⁶ John Adams Quotes
https://www.brainyquote.com/authors/john_adams

⁷ Benjamin Franklin Quotes
https://www.brainyquote.com/authors/benjamin_franklin