

## **The Higher Education Opportunity Act**

### **Making Textbook Costs Manageable for Students**

*Textbook costs have far outpaced inflation over the past decade, adding to the growing costs students face when getting a college degree.*

*According to a 2005 study conducted by the Government Accountability Office, during the 2003-2004 school year the average cost of books and supplies for students at four-year public institutions was \$898, or close to 26 percent of the average cost of tuition and fees. For students at community colleges and two-year institutions these costs are especially high, with the average cost of books and supplies running at about 75 percent of the cost of tuition and fees.*

*The GAO also determined that one of the biggest factors driving these increases has been the practice of “bundling,” in which textbook publishers package books with expensive supplementary materials, such as DVDs, CDs, or workbooks. In many cases, colleges and universities are only given pricing information on “bundled” textbooks, making it harder for them to purchase cheaper alternatives.*

*To make textbook costs more manageable for students, H.R. 4137 would:*

#### **Help students plan for textbook expenses before each semester**

- Provide students with advance information on textbook prices, allowing them to better plan for their anticipated expenses each semester.
- Give students detailed information on the textbooks their courses require, so that students can shop around for the best deal possible.

#### **Ensure that colleges and bookstores have the information needed to make the most cost-effective decisions when purchasing textbooks for their students**

- Require college textbook publishers to provide full pricing information about both bundled textbooks and unbundled alternatives.
- Require colleges and universities to provide bookstores with important course information, including the number of students enrolled.

#### **Provide students with choices when buying textbooks**

- Require publishers to also sell unbundled versions of every bundled textbook they sell.

#### **Addressing rising textbook prices is a top priority for students nationwide...**

“This legislation contains several important policy changes to increase access to college and help protect students, families and taxpayers. The bill mandates publishers disclose the price of textbooks when they sell them to faculty as well as additional information about the book’s history of revisions. In addition publishers must sell books and supplemental materials unbundled, ending a practice that drives up the cost of textbooks for many students.”

-- U.S. PIRGs Higher Education Project and the United States Student Association

*House Education and Labor Committee · July 2008*