



COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION AND LABOR
U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

February 6, 2008

Help Make College Textbooks More Affordable
Vote Yes on H.R. 4137, the College Opportunity and Affordability Act

Dear Colleague:

The high price of college textbooks is an issue that is too often overlooked in the college cost debate. Textbook prices have increased at four times the rate of inflation since 1994, according to findings of the Public Interest Research Group's (PIRG) Higher Education Project, and these costs continue to rise. Students spend an average of \$900 a year on textbooks—an amount equal to 20 percent of tuition at an average university and half of tuition at a community college. While tuition and fees can make up the bulk of a college “sticker price,” the cost of textbooks can be just as burdensome.

In the Education and Labor Committee, we have held hearings to more closely examine the challenges of rising textbook costs. In 2006, we joined together to request a report from the Advisory Committee on Student Financial Assistance that would examine the role of textbook prices in the larger college cost crisis. Last May, the Advisory Committee's report found that textbook costs *are* a growing problem, in part because the market is flawed and driven by supply rather than demand.

Tomorrow, the House has an opportunity to change that by taking concrete steps to address the high cost of college textbooks through increased disclosure and consumer protections. The *College Opportunity and Affordability Act* (H.R. 4137), scheduled for a vote on Thursday, will take steps to make textbooks more affordable through sunshine and transparency. Under the bill, publishers would be asked to provide more information to faculty about pricing, and colleges and universities will be required to notify their students about which books are needed for which classes so that students are better able to plan and prepare for textbook costs. These reforms have been endorsed by student advocates who recognize that solving the college cost crisis means addressing the role of textbook costs as well.

We urge you to join us in support of these critical college cost reforms. By keeping textbooks affordable, we can help keep college affordable. For more information, please contact the Education and Labor Committee Republican staff at x5-6558 or Representative Wu's office at x5-0855.

Sincerely,

/s/

Howard P. “Buck” McKeon (R-CA)
Senior Republican Member
Education and Labor Committee

/s/

David Wu (D-OR)
Member
Education and Labor Committee