



AB 798: College Textbook Affordability Act

Summary:

As proposed to be amended, AB 798 saves college students money by empowering professors and local campuses to adopt open educational resources (OER). AB 798 provides technology support and professional development time for professors choosing to integrate OER.

Background:

Many students and families are struggling to pay for a college education. One part of this problem is the rising cost of textbooks. Every year, students pay around \$1,300 for textbooks as prices have increased at over three times the rate of inflation.

The cost of textbooks comprises 40% of tuition at a two-year community college and 13% at a four-year public school. To afford these costs, students take on more debt, work more hours, or make choices that hinder their academic success.

AB 798 creates the OER Adoption Incentive Fund (AIF) to support and reward efforts to accelerate the adoption of OER.

OER includes teaching, learning and research resources that reside in the public domain or have been released under an intellectual property license that permits their free use and repurposing by others. OER includes full courses, course materials, modules, textbooks, videos, tests, software and any other tools, materials, or techniques used to support open access to knowledge.

It will be up to the discretion of the professors if they would like to use OER and if so, which resources would most benefit their students.

OER pilot programs have demonstrated potential cost savings of more than a billion dollars each year. For example, a student saves an average of \$128 per course when a traditional textbook is replaced with an open source textbook.

The main hurdles preventing the adoption of OER include lack of time for faculty to develop OER or adapt their classes for OER, lack of information on currently available OER, and no technology support for faculty.

AB 798 addresses all of these hurdles by leveraging existing professional development and technology funding to provide the time and support that faculty need to adopt OER. The AIF provides one, two, and three year benchmark incentives to accelerate the rate of OER adoption at local campuses.

OER has the ability to save students billions of dollars every year and have demonstrated clear benefits over the existing textbook market.

This bill:

Specifically, this bill:

- Creates the Open Educational Resources Adoption Incentive Fund (AIF)
- Declares if a local campus faculty Academic Senate passes a resolution stating its intent to increase student access to OER they will be eligible for an initial AIF grant to plan a strategy for accelerating the adoption of OER
- Designates that each year thereafter for up to three years, the local campus will receive an AIF grant for meeting established performance benchmarks
- Specifies that the AIF grant shall be used for faculty professional development, digital or OER curation activities, and/or technology support for the faculty.
- Creates a sunset after four years.

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