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HB 318 - SUPPORT
University System of Maryland - Textbooks -
Availability of Free Digital Materials
(Textbook Transparency Act of 2020)

House Appropriations Committee

02/11/2020

Dear Chair McIntosh and Members of the Appropriations Committee:

I am a student at the University of Maryland, Baltimore County leading an initiative on textbook affordability and I support HB 318. We are dedicated to reducing textbook costs through the Course Materials Initiative, working with faculty on Open Education Resources, and increasing transparency and awareness within the student body.

As an executive council member in Student Government, I have met with students to discuss textbook affordability. One of the students I spoke with was really passionate about a course they found in the catalog, but ended up having to drop the class because it required a \$500 textbook. Another student pursuing a language certificate was told they could use the same textbook for an upper level course, only to discover later that the textbook had changed and they had to purchase a new one. Not all courses require textbooks and when they do, prices can vary greatly; textbooks for STEM courses are on average \$45 more expensive than those for humanities. Even within the same course, sections taught by one professor might utilize an open-source textbook while another could require one costing over \$100.

HB 318 and the Textbook Transparency Act of 2020 will give students access to this information directly within the course catalog so that they can make a knowledgeable decision prior to registration. While Board of Regents Policy, State of Maryland law, and the HEOA do require textbook information to be released before course registration, linking it to the course catalog, which is often the primary source of information for students, ensures that it is easily seen and accessible.

Student loan debt hit \$1.56 trillion dollars at the beginning of this month. We need to work to alleviate costs where we can by supporting open education resources and HB 318 and textbook transparency is a step forward in propelling further action. Therefore, we urge a favorable report on HB 318.