

HOUSE TAXATION COMMITTEE  
Cover Page

(Please complete and include this page with your written testimony)

Bill Number: HB2265

Support: Yes

Oppose: No

Neutral: No

Testimony Will Be: Oral In-person No

Oral WebEx: Yes

Written Only No

For Meeting On February 22nd

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On Behalf of: Fort Hays State University

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Distinguished Members of the House,

Paying for textbooks was the second largest economic stressor for students, falling second only to paying tuition in a study by Cengage. Over the past few decades, textbook prices have skyrocketed alongside the price of attending college, and although this bill does not aim to fix those massive problems, the push for a tax exemption on college textbooks exists within the much larger conversation growing from the crossroads of higher education, affordability, and the future of young Kansans that must be had.

Speaking as a current student and a Senator in the Student Government Association at Fort Hays State University, our college is known for putting economic accessibility first for students. As a result, many of our students come from lower socioeconomic backgrounds and have fewer traditional financial supports. Looking through that lens, when we talk about textbooks in the 21st century, what we're really talking about is a barrier to education. What should be a tool that unlocks discussion, brings expert insights, and takes curriculum to a heightened level has become a financial stressor that forces students to decide between groceries for the week or the book they need to write all of their essays in class. It's forcing a decision for a single mom between taking care of her own child or buying the \$100 access code that cannot be bypassed, as it unlocks all of her homework for the semester. These are students I know and that I have heard from. Friends who have what is amounting to a full-time job, are juggling 15 credit hours, and don't know what to do when the semester starts as \$300 in textbook fees are due to be paid within the week. The least we can do is alleviate the tax burden on these students to make those resources more affordable. And it makes economic sense to do so, as the aim of taxation is to fund programs for the general welfare, to help government function, and to benefit the people. When we add a tax onto what is already a barrier, we must realize that it's doing more harm than good and is antithetical to the purpose of taxation.

Sitting on the Open Educational Resource Committee at my university has opened my eyes to the gross problems, but also promising solutions, regarding textbooks in higher education. We have to do better for Kansans to combat the inaccessibility of college education, also needing to work harder to incentivize students to stay in-state for college, reducing the brain drain of our brightest and retaining our most promising assets to grow our great state into the future.

This is but one step in that marathon, but it is a step in the right direction. I urge you all to consider it as such and to put more of your time and effort into spearheading the solutions which seek to fulfill our education system to its greatest potential

Thank you.