

Assembly Bill 2624

Course Material Transparency

Assembly Member Ash Kalra

SUMMARY

Assembly Bill (AB) 2624 would close price transparency gaps by requiring the California State Universities and California Community Colleges, and encouraging the University of California, to display estimated course materials for 75% of courses offered on the online course schedule platform.

BACKGROUND

Existing law requires the California Community Colleges and California State Universities, and encourages the University of California, to display in the course schedule when a course has zero-cost digital materials. Additionally, the Federal Higher Education Opportunity Act of 2008 requires campuses receiving federal funds to disclose textbook costs and ISBN numbers for textbooks on the course schedule.

In the decade since the Higher Education Opportunity Act was written, the types of materials students are expected to purchase has widened to include digital homework platforms and other new technologies that are not captured. AB 2624 would close price transparency gaps by including these newer forms of course materials.

Course material costs make up a significant portion of the costs of secondary education, especially at community colleges. Unlike fees and tuition, course material costs are not fixed which makes it challenging for students to plan ahead. These types of digital materials are typically single use, and students have no mechanism to recoup costs when the course ends as they could with some physical materials, such as reselling a textbook.

SOLUTION

AB 2624 would increase cost transparency for students by requiring the California Community Colleges and California State Universities, and encouraging the University of California, to display estimated course material costs on the online course schedule platform ahead of course registration.

To provide campuses with greater flexibility and account for classes where the instructor is not yet designated or an instructor is still in the process of selecting materials, this bill would require institutions to provide these estimates for only 75% of courses.

This bill defines course materials as physical and digital textbooks, devices such as calculators and remote attendance platforms, and software subscriptions, which would provide students a more thorough estimate of costs.

The increased transparency will allow students to make informed decisions for course registration in a manner that works best for them financially.

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