

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

April 19, 2024

The Honorable Miguel Cardona
Secretary of Education
U.S. Department of Education
400 Maryland Avenue, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20202

Dear Secretary Cardona:

We write to express our strong support for the Department of Education's (Department) proposed changes to 34 CFR § 668.164(c) of the Cash Management regulations that would require institutions of higher education to obtain authorization from a student before deducting the cost of books and supplies from their federal financial aid.

The cost of college, including the cost of textbooks and course materials, can put a postsecondary education out of reach for many students. Students need more choices—not fewer—in the textbook marketplace so they can make the best decision for their own needs. That is why we have worked to expand the use of open textbooks—education resources that are licensed under an open license and made available free of charge to the public—through the Department's Open Textbook Pilot (Pilot) and the Affordable College Textbook Act. The Pilot is projected to have saved students more than \$250 million, and we thank the Department for its continued support of this program.

The Department's proposed changes to the Cash Management regulations would eliminate an institution's ability to automatically bill students for books and supplies, effectively shifting the textbook industry's so-called "Inclusive Access" and "Equitable Access" programs from an opt-out model to an opt-in model. This would allow students to choose how to spend their financial aid dollars on books and supplies. It would empower them to take advantage of affordable alternatives, such as used and open textbooks.

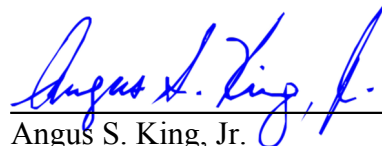
Healthy competition in the textbook industry is important to drive down prices and expand innovations like open textbooks. The Department's proposed changes would be a meaningful step to promote more balance in the traditional textbook market, which has been dominated by increasing prices at the expense of students.

Thank you for your leadership on this important matter. We look forward to continuing to work with the Department to make textbooks and course materials more affordable for students.

Sincerely,



Richard J. Durbin
United States Senator



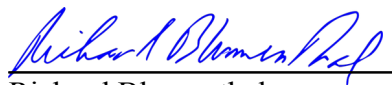
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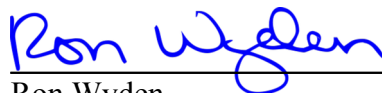
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