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SB 146 - Sponsor Statement

TEXTBOOK COST TRANSPARENCY ACT

"An Act relating to costs of and charges for textbooks and other course materials required for University of Alaska courses; and providing for an effective date."

For decades a major roadblock to the acquisition of higher education in this country has been costs. Students in Alaska and throughout the United States often find themselves in difficult situations attempting to balance the various costs of higher education such as tuition, room and board, and course materials. For many students cost of material can be a deciding factor in the decision to take a course due to the sometimes-exorbitant prices of required course materials. Students often find themselves as consumers subject to a captive market that has experienced a colossal growth in price over the last several decades. The costly and unique nature of the textbook and course material market has led to many students being forced to "shop around" and attempt to engage the market as informed consumers.

The Textbook Cost Transparency Act provides students with vital information about their textbook and course materials while they are registering for classes, allowing them to make informed choices and financially plan. The goal of this legislation is to provide students with as much information regarding cost as early as possible in the registration process with clearly defined definitions integrated into the University of Alaska's shared online course catalog (UAOnline). By allowing students to see which classes come at "zero-cost" or "low-cost" they will be able to make more informed financial decisions more easily.

While faculty will remain the paramount deciders of class materials, we believe that by providing students this information we will be building towards a more equitable and cost-effective University System for students at the class level.

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