

Effort to Overhaul Affordable Access Programs Likely to Increase Textbook Prices and Harm Student Success

Struggling college students may soon face higher college costs thanks to a misguided regulatory effort to upend successful discounted textbook programs that have helped slash student spending on course materials by a whopping 57% since 2016.

Embraced by more than 1,500 institutions nationwide, affordable access programs (known as Inclusive Access or Equitable Access) helped students save over [\\$130 million](#) on course materials during the 2022-2023 school year alone. Alarming, the Department of Education is exploring a possible regulation to change these cost-savings programs by requiring a new opt-in model that will send textbook prices soaring and put student outcomes at risk.

Here's what could happen if the Department of Education's effort to overhaul affordable access programs is successful:



Textbook Prices Spike: Affordable access programs saved students more than [\\$130 million](#) during the 2022-2023 school year. If these programs are no longer structured in a way that helps institutions negotiate the best bulk discounts on textbooks and course materials, student spending on course materials could jump by hundreds of dollars.



Student Outcomes Decline: Affordable access programs ensure students have the course materials that they need on or before the first day of class, which leads to better academic performance. If affordable access programs are changed to an opt-in model, participation will decline, prices will rise, and students are more likely to delay purchasing textbooks due to cost. When textbook prices were at an all-time high in 2014, [nearly two-thirds](#) of students chose not to purchase course materials due to cost, even though they knew that decision could hurt their grades.



Greater Risk for Underserved Students: Affordable access programs ensure all students have the materials they need at discounted prices – this is especially valuable to nontraditional and disadvantaged students who may have fewer resources and less time to invest in sourcing materials on their own. Research confirms affordable access programs resulted in [substantial increases](#) in course completion for Black students and adult learners. If the current affordable access structure is altered, at-risk students could face more barriers to college success.



Less Choice and Convenience for Students: Right now, students can choose whether they want to have all their materials delivered automatically on the first day of class at below-retail prices, or they can decide to opt out of affordable access and purchase materials on their own. If the Department gets rid of the current opt-out model, students will be forced to find all their materials on their own – [a significant burden](#) – and they will no longer have access to the same bulk discounts that are currently secured by institutions.

The Department's attempt to overhaul affordable access programs could **jeopardize students' ability to obtain their required course materials at steep discounts**, which will harm academic outcomes and cause the **greatest harm to disadvantaged students**. Instead of advancing regulations that could have unintended consequences for college costs, the **Department of Education should STOP this misguided rulemaking effort and ensure institutions can continue offering these popular, successful, and affordable programs**.

To learn more and stay informed on this regulatory effort, visit [keeptextbooksaffordable.org](https://www.keeptextbooksaffordable.org) and [take action](#) to tell the Department not to advance this troubling regulation.