



**Senate Education, Health and Environmental Affairs Committee
February 21, 2008**

**Submitted by
Clay Whitlow, Executive Director, Maryland Association of Community Colleges**

BILL: SB 657 – College Textbook Competition and Affordability Act of 2008

POSITION: Letter of Support with Amendments

On behalf of the State's 16 community colleges, we are pleased that the General Assembly is concerned about the rising cost of textbooks. On average, textbook purchases will increase the annual cost for a student attending a community college by 25%. This increase is even greater for students in some of our allied health programs. Because cost is a significant concern for our students in electing to attend a community college, the increasing price of textbooks is particularly alarming.

The Department of Legislative Services recent report *Affordability and Accessibility of Textbooks in Higher Education* identifies several ways to assist with these rising costs. Throughout the years community colleges have instituted a number of these recommendations, including buy-back programs, bulk ordering and on-line purchasing ability. While there may be new practices and policies we can incorporate, we recognize that any real impact affecting the rising cost of textbooks needs to come from the publishing houses. We are particularly pleased that the US. House of Representatives has recently passed legislation that will impact textbook costs by requiring publishers to 1) disclose pricing in any promotional materials they send to professors, 2) sell unbundled versions of their products and disclose packaging options, and 3) provide revision histories on all materials sent to professors.

In the meantime, community colleges welcome the opportunity to work with our faculty and campus bookstores to examine our current policies and practices in order to better meet the needs of our students in addressing the high costs of textbooks. However, because of the wide diversity of our 16 institutions we find the relationships between our institutions and the operations of our campus bookstores to vary considerably from college to college. Currently 9 of our institutions internally manage their bookstores and 6 contract for these services. While our urban colleges may have access to off-campus and used book stores most of our rural colleges do not. Textbook accessibility is an extremely important issue for many of our smaller institutions serving rural communities and measures outlined in SB 657 may threaten future book store contracts. In addition, the revenue received from campus bookstores are used to fund a wide variety of other student services that would be adversely impacted if SB 657 is enacted as originally drafted. We therefore ask the Committee to give each institution discretion in developing and implementing the policies outlined in SB 657 that will most effectively address the rising cost of textbooks at each of our colleges.

In addition, we would like the Committee to consider enhancements to Maryland's Digital Library to assist with this issue. Focusing on expanding the use of undergraduate databases and electronic books for all students at reduced costs will have a tremendous impact on how students use and purchase textbooks in the future.