Dear Chairman Scott, Representatives Davis, Fox, and Smucker:

On behalf of the National Association of College Stores (NACS), I write to express our appreciation for your leadership in higher education and for your work in renewing the Higher Education Act during this Congress.

Headquartered in Oberlin, Ohio NACS is the professional trade association representing the collegiate and school retailing community. Our members are college and university and school owned and independent non-profit stores. We conduct extensive research into course material use and affordability, establish best practices, and partner with innovative non-profits and companies that help our members support student success, the campus experience and the missions of higher education institutions.

We are pleased that H.R.4674, The College Affordability Act of 2019, as introduced includes a number of proposals to address college affordability including new and increased investments in student aid and institutional support. We particularly support the bill’s provisions that recognize the need for affordable access to quality course materials for all students including students in dual enrollment programs, with disabilities, and who are incarcerated. We are also appreciative of the committee supporting innovations in course material development and delivery through support for digital and print commercial content and open educational resources (OER).
While we are pleased with many of the provisions in the CAA, we believe there are opportunities for making the legislation even stronger and address several drafting concerns. Specifically, we urge the committee as it proceeds to:

1. **Amend Sec. 1024 Textbook Information.** We urge the committee to include Sec. 4 of H.R. 2107 - Affordable College Textbook Act in the bill. Sec. 133 Textbook Information of HEA and the Textbook Rental pilot in Sec. 803 of the Higher Education Opportunity Act of 2008 are the unequivocal success stories of the HEOA. Since passage of HEOA, average student required course material spending has declined 41%. According to data released this month from the National Center for Education Statistics, cost of attendance budgets for books and supplies have declined in every sector of higher education over the last two years. While in California, the California Student Aid Commission recently released guidance to public institutions in the state dramatically cutting course materials, supplies, and equipment/technology aid budgets by 45.21% or $891 for the 2020/2021 school year based on what students told them they are now spending. Finally, the GAO in its report to Congress evaluating the implementation of Sec. 133, found students were benefiting from the law and schools’ efforts.

Even with such success, an eleven year old law requires some minor, but important refinement. The amendments contained in Sec. 4 of H.R. 2107 are broadly supported by student organizations, faculty groups, community college associations and NACS based on our years of efforts to support implementation. They would, among other things:

- Promote more accurate and complete information for students so they don’t make costly mistakes.
- Strengthen effective implementation of Sec 133 (a) and (d) by encouraging timely selections by faculty to lower costs and support bookstores and disability support offices identify options that will work for all students, including for students with disabilities, and at more affordable cost for students and institutions.

2. **Update and use consistent terminology in treating course materials, books, supplies, equipment and technology.** We remain concerned HEA and the CAA continue applying outdated and inconsistent terms in describing and applying cost of attendance for course materials, books, supplies, equipment and technology and how these necessary resources and aid are delivered. This has led to complicated and conflicting provisions in law and

---

3 California Student Aid Commission, [https://www.csac.ca.gov/post/student-expense-budget](https://www.csac.ca.gov/post/student-expense-budget)
regulations. We have proposed several amendments to address this issue and hope the committee will incorporate these into the bill.

3. **Dual Enrollment Program.** We encourage the committee to include required course materials, equipment, and technology as allowable uses in the state grants and the national grants. Currently only “purchasing textbooks” is allowable in the national grants; however, most dual enrollment programs that cover course material costs pay for the use of textbooks in the course, which may not always involve the college or university “purchasing” the materials. For example, in order to stretch limited dollars, programs will pay to cover the cost of renting the textbooks so students have no out of pocket costs. Furthermore, if digital materials are provided, some students may need access to technology devices that can be rented out to students to ensure access to the content the student needs to succeed.

4. **Sec. 117 burden.** We are concerned the addition of “textbooks” added to Sec. 117 of HEA will result in unintended information gathering of teacher editions, samples, and digital rights free files publishers provide institutions to address the needs for accommodations for students with disabilities. This will create unnecessary burden on institutions and should be addressed by narrowing the scope of this data collection to only materials developed and provided by foreign governments.

NACS supports efforts to enhance affordable and equitable access to quality course materials and will continue to work as an ally for student interests. We look forward to continuing to work with you and your staff in the weeks ahead on this important legislation. Should you have any questions please contact Richard Hershman, Vice President of Government Relations at (202) 778-4587 or rhershman@nacs.org.

Sincerely,

Edward Schlichenmayer
Chief Executive Officer