STATE OF NEW YORK

7954

IN SENATE

January 4, 2024

Introduced by Sen. PARKER -- read twice and ordered printed, and when printed to be committed to the Committee on Higher Education

AN ACT to amend the education law, in relation to enacting the "free resources for equitable education (FREE) act"

The People of the State of New York, represented in Senate and Assembly, do enact as follows:

Section 1. This act shall be known and may be cited as the "free resources for equitable education (FREE) act".

§ 2. The education law is amended by adding a new section 716 to read as follows:

§ 716. Free resources for equitable education (FREE) act. 1. As used in this section, the following terms shall have the following meanings, unless referenced otherwise:

(a) "general education" refers to courses which do not expressly satisfy major specific requirements, including pre-requisite courses;

(b) "institutions of higher education" means the state university of New York or institutions recognized and approved by the regents of the University of the State of New York, which provide a course of study leading to the granting of a post-secondary degree or diploma;

(c) "low textbook cost (LTC)" means the designation assigned to courses to demonstrate that required textbooks do not cost more than forty dollars;

(d) "major specific" refers to any course that is considered expressly necessary to the continued development and teachings of key concepts within a given major;

(e) "textbook" means any textbook that is adopted for use in a given course, as determined by the presiding faculty or faculty members or entity charged with selecting such textbooks; and

(f) "zero textbook cost (ZTC)" means the designation assigned to courses to demonstrate that it does not require the purchase of any textbook.

2. All general education courses offered by an institution of higher education in which textbooks are assigned by a professor or other faculty member shall have a ZTC or LTC designation.

EXPLANATION--Matter in *italics* (underscored) is new; matter in brackets [-] is old law to be omitted.

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3. Twenty-five percent of all major specific courses offered by an institution of higher education in which textbooks are assigned by a professor or other faculty member shall have a ZTC or LTC designation.

4. Institutions of higher education shall determine which courses and the corresponding textbooks are designated ZTC or LTC.

5. ZTC and LTC designations shall be clearly visible and easily accessible by students in any course information materials or course enrollment system. If a course designation changes for any reason, students shall be allowed to secure an appropriate replacement course or discontinue any course without any financial or other institutional penalty.

6. Institutions of higher education shall institute this section in a manner that does not redistribute the financial cost of such textbook designations on students including but not limited to assigning more textbooks in other courses or increasing tuition or students' fees.

§ 3. This act shall take effect on the one hundred twentieth day after it shall have become a law; provided, however, the amendments to article 15-B of the education law made by section two of this act shall not affect the repeal of such article and shall be deemed repealed therewith.