

Dear House Education Committee Members:

I would like to express my strong support for House Bill 26-1016, which will continue the Open Educational Resources (OER) program for five years. OER refers to learning materials released under an intellectual property license that permits free use and repurposing by others.

As an Associate Professor of Nursing at the CU Anschutz Medical Campus College of Nursing, I am currently working on creating a zero-textbook cost (ZTC) undergraduate nursing program. This legislation is essential to advancing that work. We are seeing more students coming to nursing school with extra demands on their lives. Students need to work so that they can afford basic necessities like food and shelter while also caring for families. Nursing textbooks are notoriously expensive and not feasible for all students to purchase. Coupled with the cost of college, we see students' daily struggle to meet their financial needs associated with nursing school. By eliminating textbook costs, OER helps ensure that nursing remains an accessible profession for all students.

Eliminating textbook costs is impactful for our students. As a recipient of OER funds, in 2024-2025 I was able to eliminate over \$80,000 in textbook costs for students. In 2025-2026, I hope to eliminate nearly \$90,000. By the following year, the goal is to eliminate another \$240,000. The continued funding provides us the ability to save nursing students thousands of dollars every semester and allows student nurses to focus on matters most: learning how to care for your loved ones.

A diverse nursing workforce is critical to meeting the needs of Colorado's communities. Our students come from a variety of backgrounds and reducing financial barriers allows individuals to pursue a career they may have previously viewed as unattainable. This also allows us to expand the nursing workforce at a time when nurses are so vital for everyone's continued health.

I strongly support the General Assembly in advancing this legislation so nursing students across the state of Colorado can benefit from Open Educational Resources.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Teresa Connolly".

Teresa Connolly, PHD, RN, ACNS-BC

**To: Members of the House Education Committee**

**From: Khoa Nguyen | Rocky Mountain Policy & Advocacy Fellow, Young Invincibles - CO**

**Re: HB26-1016 - Continuation of Open Educational Resource Programs**

Madam Chair, and members of the committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to share my testimony. My name is **Khoa Nguyen**. I currently represent Young Invincibles CO as their Rocky Mountain Policy & Advocacy Fellow. I am also nearing completion of my MD/MBA at the University of Colorado in 4 months. I am here today to encourage you to **pass HB26-1016 - Continuation of Open Educational Resource Programs**.

As many of you know, higher education comes at a price. Undergraduate and graduate education are already expensive enough without the added stress of having to buy textbooks. Studies have found that more than 80% of students believe textbooks are overpriced, and nearly half have reported having to sacrifice other essentials, such as food or transportation, just to support them [1]. Studies have shown that OER adoption has been associated with higher course completion and better grades, reinforcing the key relationship between educational affordability and academic success [2].

Colorado's experience demonstrates how these national affordability challenges for higher education can be addressed through targeted, evidence-based policy. Since the launch of Colorado's OER grant program, over 2,291 courses and more than 176,000 students annually benefit from the program. Under the 2025 OER report, the program has delivered more than \$59.7 million in documented student textbook savings from an initial state investment of about \$5.35 million. That is an 11x return on investment [3].

Personally, the affordability of education has been a notable issue throughout my academic development. During college, I often spent between \$100 and \$200 on required textbooks or online resources for my courses. Taking an average of 6 classes per semester can add \$600-\$1,200 to your total costs per semester, in addition to tuition. Even beyond the classroom, my preparation for the Medical College Admissions Test (MCAT) required spending >\$800 on educational resources. There were occasions when I borrowed textbooks from friends or used limited library copies to complete my coursework. These costs add up. How can we expect students to succeed academically, develop professionally, and contribute to our society and workforce if their access to resources necessary for learning remains limited?

It is clear that open educational resources reduce costs for students and families, support classroom innovation, and make education more equitable and accessible. We need to ensure that Colorado continues to prioritize the education of our future generations. I urge you to vote yes on **HB26-1016**. Thank you for your attention to this essential issue.



From the desk of Khoa Ngoc Nguyen | Rocky Mountain Policy & Advocacy Fellow  
For questions, please contact: [khoa.nguyen@younginvincibles.org](mailto:khoa.nguyen@younginvincibles.org)

**To: Members of the House Education Committee**

**From: Khoa Nguyen | Rocky Mountain Policy & Advocacy Fellow, Young Invincibles - CO**

**Re: HB26-1016 - Continuation of Open Educational Resource Programs**

Sincerely,

Khoa Ngoc Nguyen

Rocky Mountain Policy & Advocacy Fellow | Young Invincibles - CO

MD Candidate | University of Colorado School of Medicine

MBA Candidate | University of Colorado Denver Business School



### References

1. NCAN article “Affordability from the Ground Up: Open Educational Resources”:  
National College Attainment Network. Affordability from the Ground Up: Open Educational Resources [Internet]. 2025 Oct 7 [cited 2026 Jan 27]. Available from: <https://www.ncan.org/news/711959/Affordability-from-the-Ground-Up-Open-Educational-Resources.htm>
2. PMC article on OER academic outcomes: Fischer L, et al. A multi-institutional study of the impact of open textbook adoption on course outcomes. *PLoS One*. 2015;10(6):e0131183. Available from: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7115070/>
3. Colorado’s 2025 Open Educational Resources Report (PDF):  
Colorado Department of Higher Education. *2025 Open Educational Resources Report*. Denver (CO): Colorado Department of Higher Education; 2025 Dec 12. Available from: [https://highered.colorado.gov/publications/Reports/Legislative/OER/OER\\_Report\\_2025\\_Final.pdf](https://highered.colorado.gov/publications/Reports/Legislative/OER/OER_Report_2025_Final.pdf)



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Written testimony in support of House Bill 26-1016  
(Continuation of Open Educational Resources Policies)

Chair and Members of the House Education Committee:

I respectfully submit this written testimony in strong support of House Bill 26-1016, concerning the continuation of open educational resources (OER) policies in Colorado.

My perspective is grounded in direct implementation work. I have served on the MSU Denver OER Task Force since August 2022, when I began my faculty appointment with the institution. During this period, I initiated and have led a School of Hospitality “Five-Year Project” that operates within the framework of Colorado’s state OER grant funding. The project’s goal is straightforward: convert all required courses in our Hospitality Leadership degree to zero-cost textbooks using faculty-developed and faculty-adopted OER. We are currently in year two. To date, we have developed and are developing seven distinct OER course materials for seven courses, with additional years planned to complete the program-wide conversion. I also serve as a liaison among our school, the OER Task Force, and the grant principal investigator, supporting coordination and accountability across stakeholders.

For my students, OER is not merely a cost-containment strategy. I view OER as an access and equity mechanism: if Colorado wants more Coloradans to enter and complete higher education, we must identify barriers and remove them, and textbook costs are a clear and recurring barrier. Even at institutions that many families already perceive as comparatively affordable, students routinely make enrollment, course-load, and persistence decisions based on the out-of-pocket costs that appear at the beginning of each term. OER makes a concrete difference by removing a predictable, upfront expense and ensuring day-one access to course materials. This matters in practice, not only in principle, because students can engage with the full learning sequence immediately, rather than rationing access or delaying purchase.

In hospitality management education, OER also advances a workforce-development imperative. My school’s curriculum is intentionally practical and competency-based, designed to prepare students to perform in professional environments soon after graduation. Our industry advisory boards are active and explicit about the competencies they expect graduates to demonstrate, and meeting those expectations at scale requires recruiting and supporting more students through completion. In this context, OER serves as enabling infrastructure: it reduces avoidable friction at the point of entry, strengthens persistence conditions, and supports a more stable pipeline of career-ready graduates for the Coloradan industry.

House Bill 26-1016 is particularly important because it protects the continuity of multi-year implementation work already underway across Colorado. At the program level, OER conversion is not a single purchase decision; it is a sustained cycle of development, adoption, revision, accessibility review, instructional design support, and continuous improvement. The bill’s

extension of the program's repeal date aligns with the realities of building durable, high-quality course materials that remain current and pedagogically and practically effective over time.

For these reasons, I urge the House Education Committee to support House Bill 26-1016 and advance it favorably.

Respectfully submitted,

Jangwoo (JJ) Jo, Ph.D.

Assistant Professor in Hospitality Management

School of Hospitality, Metropolitan State University of Denver