



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
OFFICE OF THE UNDER SECRETARY

January 15, 2019

Honorable Richard J. Durbin
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Durbin:

Thank you for your October 12, 2018, letter to Secretary DeVos regarding implementation of the Open Textbooks Pilot Program. Your letter has been referred to my office, and I am pleased to respond. A copy of this response will be sent to each cosigner of your letter.

Congress continued to support the Open Textbooks Pilot Program with level funding of \$5 million in the Fiscal Year (FY) 2019 Department of Education Appropriations Act, 2019, which was included in P.L. 115-245. As we build upon the FY 2018 investment of \$4.9 million in "Expanding the LibreTexts Project into the Next-Generation Hub for Construction, Dissemination, and Usage of Open Educational Resource Textbooks" led by the University of California (UC) – Davis, we will continue to ensure implementation of the Pilot is most effective at achieving savings for students and improving student learning outcomes.

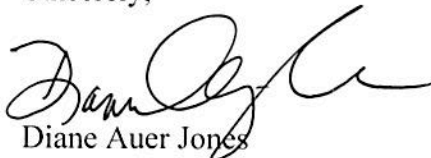
Notably, while there are numerous federally funded grants for Open Educational Resources (OER) at levels below \$1 million, the Department's Open Textbooks Pilot contemplates larger investments and consortia arrangements to ensure participation by a large number of institutions. By employing this unique model, we have the potential to help more students gain greater cost savings. It also provides enhanced opportunities for impact on a national scale by actively engaging a much broader community of stakeholders.

As your letter notes, the explanatory statement accompanying P.L. 115-245 recommended that the Department conduct a new competition to award FY 2019 funds. A new competition could require the Department to undertake new rulemaking as required by the Administrative Procedure Act (5 U.S.C. 553). However, there are unfunded, high-quality, highly ranked applications from the FY 2018 grant competition available to make new awards immediately. Therefore, we intend to use the grant slate developed in FY 2018 for the Open Textbooks Pilot to make two new grant awards in FY 2019. This will expand the number of institutions of higher education included in the group of funded consortia by eight to a total of 20 institutions between the FY 2018 and FY 2019 competitions.

As we work to implement the next phase of the Open Textbooks Pilot, we will continue to ensure that funded projects expand the use of open source textbooks and achieve savings for students.

Again, thank you for your work on Open Textbooks and your strong interest in the FY 2019 Open Textbooks Pilot program. If you have any additional questions, please contact the Office of Legislation and Congressional Affairs at (202) 401-0020.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Diane Auer Jones". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "D" and a long, sweeping tail.

Diane Auer Jones
Principal Deputy Under Secretary
Delegated the Duties of Under Secretary