February 18, 2019

**Testimony on HB 1: Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board Open Educational Resources (OER) Exceptional Items**

The Texas Library Association (TLA) supports the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board’s (THECB) exceptional item requests to increase availability of, and access to, Open Educational Resources (OER) in Texas’ colleges and universities.

THECB seeks $250,000 to develop an OER repository and $200,000 to fund grants for development of OER course materials.

OER offers one solution to the impact of rising textbook costs. If students cannot afford the books and materials needed to successfully complete a course, outcomes such as retention rates, graduation rates and workforce preparedness are negatively impacted. Being able to obtain free textbooks and other course materials online can make a great difference in students’ success.

A University of Georgia study* shows the advantages of OER go beyond textbook affordability for students. Using OER improves students’ grades. For students receiving Pell Grants, part-time students and populations historically underserved by higher education, OER can have an even greater impact.

SB 810, passed by the 85th Texas Legislature, directed the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) to establish a grant program to encourage faculty to develop OER materials, and to conduct a study on creating a statewide repository of OER resources.

These exceptional items would continue the grant program, and fund the development of an OER repository using OER Commons, an existing resource. Both of these items are a positive first step toward increasing the availability and use of OER across Texas.

Over time, however, TLA believes that Texas must commit ongoing, significant resources to OER development – not only for technical development and maintenance, but perhaps more importantly, for a comprehensive management and communication program to encourage creation, usage and adoption.

**About the Texas Library Association**

The Texas Library Association is the largest state library association in the United States with approximately 6,500 members. Our members work in public, K-12 school, college and university, and special (i.e. medical, corporate, law) libraries across the state.

---