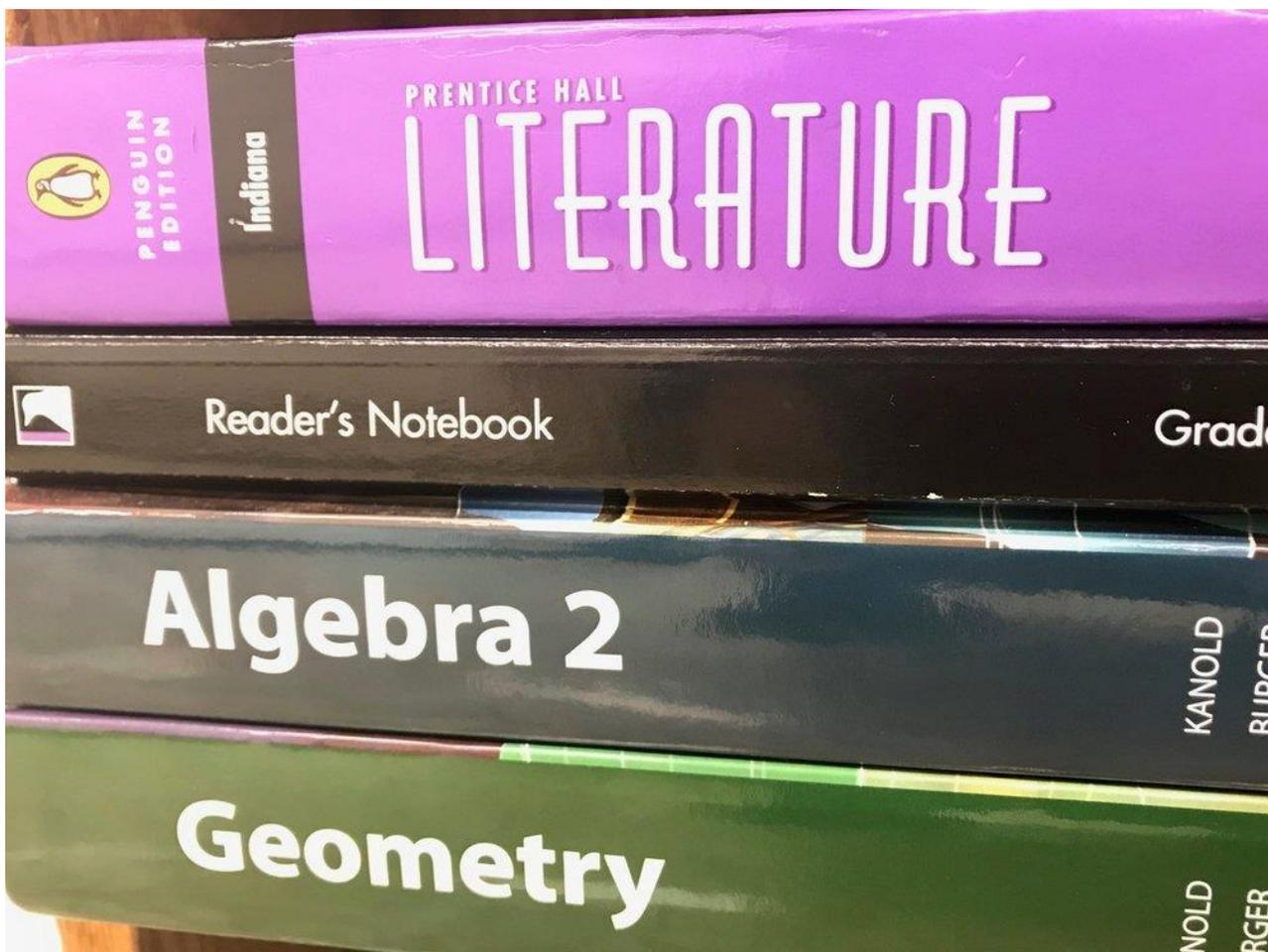


Indiana is One of Eight States Where Parents Pay Textbooks Fees. When Will This Change?

By [Shawnta S. Barnes](#) – February 2, 2018



My boys are in first grade this year. For each of my sons, my husband and I paid \$27 for education fees, \$99 for textbooks, and \$36 for workbooks. When you add those fees up for both our children, we paid \$324 this school year. That does not include the money we spent, a little over \$100, for school supplies.

Students are entitled to a free public education, but is that education really free if you have to pay for textbooks and materials? It wasn't until former Indiana Superintendent of Public Instruction Glenda Ritz suggested the state pick up textbook costs that I learned textbook fees are not the norm across the country. I have only ever lived in Indiana, so I thought everyone had to pay this fee. I know we pay taxes to help fund schools and I know students need materials to learn, so I didn't think it was too much to ask for parents to pay for textbooks. Once I learned the majority of U.S. parents do not pay textbook fees, I felt a bit jaded about it, and I want this bill eliminated from my family's budget.

Rep. Scott Pelath authored House Bill 1169 to provide curriculum materials without charging parents. There is a Change.org petition signed by over 6,000 people in support of this bill. This petition points out, "Private school parents and homeschoolers in Indiana can write off school supplies and textbooks when they file their taxes, but not parents of children in Indiana's public schools." If students qualify for free and reduced lunch, their textbook fees are waived.

It is not clear if this bill will be voted on and make it out of committee during this legislative session, but this is an issue lawmakers need to seriously consider especially as many schools are moving to online curricula and resources and some schools don't even use all of the materials parents purchased. Last week, my son was about to toss a school-issued book inside our recycling bin. I immediately told him to stop and he said, "Mommy, my teacher said we don't need this anymore. It's paper so I thought I should recycle it." Upon a closer examination, I saw that my son had completed only 54 out of 223 pages in this reading workbook, a little less than 25%. Not that I want my children completing worksheets from a workbook all day, but why have parents pay for resources that are barely used? I hope before my sons graduate from high school that legislation will be passed that eliminates textbook fees for Indiana families.