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ASSEMBLY, SENATE PASS LEGISLATION DESIGNED TO FUEL ECONOMY, SAVE MONEY

The New York State Legislature has given final passage to legislation creating an information infrastructure that would dramatically increase access to the cutting-edge information needed to forge new partnerships between public and private universities and businesses in New York State.

Known as ARIA, the Academic Research Information Access Act, sponsored by Assemblyman Robin Schimminger, D-C-I-Kenmore, and Senator James Alesi, R-C-I-Perinton, would enable the state's public and private higher education sector to voluntarily pool resources and assets from their academic libraries to facilitate better collaboration and efficiencies through high-end electronic, peer-reviewed information resources such as journals, serials and databases.

"In today's information age, knowledge is not only power, it is key to stimulating economic growth," said Schimminger, chair of the Assembly Committee on Economic Development, Job Creation, Commerce and Industry. "By creating a comprehensive, cooperative program to make electronic academic research information accessible to both public and private universities and businesses, we can improve the ability of New York's businesses to compete with companies in other states, many of which have already established their own information infrastructures."

Through the ARIA program, State University of New York (SUNY) and City University of New York (CUNY) campuses, including the University at Buffalo, and Buffalo State College, as well as independent institutions such as University of Rochester, Rochester Institute of Technology, Columbia University, Cornell University, New York University, Syracuse University and Canisius College, as well as the New York State Library, will have the ability to pool their resources and share information that may not have been available to them otherwise.

"New York is rich in highly recognized two-year and four-year, public and private colleges and universities," said Senator Alesi, chair of the Senate Committee on Commerce, Economic Development and Small Business. "ARIA will serve as a mechanism whereby our academic and research infrastructure will expand access to cutting-edge research, particularly in STEM studies: science, technology, engineering and mathematics. Moreover, when fully implemented, ARIA will lower costs for colleges and universities, and small businesses, furthering innovation, entrepreneurialism and job creation."

Supported by the Commission on Independent Colleges and Universities (CICU) and endorsed by the New York State Commission on Higher Education, it is expected

that ARIA will save SUNY between \$7 million and \$9 million annually, CUNY between \$2 million and \$3 million annually, and New York State's independent colleges and universities between \$5 million and \$15 million annually. Electronic information resources account for 30 percent of the budgets at state academic and research libraries, amounting to nearly \$160 million in recent years – nearly \$500 million for all of New York's academic and research libraries. Over a four-year period, these resources have grown 42 percent; the prices of some journals have risen as much as 50 percent over the past five years, at a time when most campuses have had to deal with budget cuts.

Due to anticipated savings to colleges and universities – a preliminary survey of academic and research libraries demonstrates the average participant will enjoy a 7 percent reduction in cost, and a 10 percent increase in collection size – ARIA has garnered much support in higher education and business fields:

Jason Kramer, Executive Director of New York State Higher Education Initiative said, “For years, New York has sought to leverage its incredible academic sector to support economic growth. ARIA does that, and does it in a way that actually saves dollars.”

Laura L. Anglin, President of the Albany-based Commission on Independent Colleges and Universities, said, “The Academic Research Information Access Act is a perfect example of how collaboration among New York's colleges and universities can support entrepreneurs, small business owners and community-based organizations. Pursuing statewide contracts and licenses of electronic information resources makes fiscal sense in these challenging times, and making cutting-edge information available to those outside campus communities will support regional economic development.”

Brian McMahon, Executive Director of the New York State Economic Development Council, said “The importance of university research in expanding New York's innovation economy cannot be overstated. ARIA will bring more aggregated research to entrepreneurs, university and private sector researchers, small businesses, and other stakeholders in New York's innovation economy. This legislation is an important building block for the state's future tech-based economy.”

ARIA provides that the state pursue electronic research collections under the guidance of a volunteer advisory board representative of the academic and research library community. This board will manage dealings with the publishers. Upon agreement, the state will act as an aggregator of library funds – voluntarily offered – and serve as the single contract holder. The participating institutions will gain needed budget relief through the collective buying power of all participating partners. In turn, the state will stipulate that contracts for the information resources provide access to qualified emerging technology companies, thus lowering their cost of doing business.

Now that ARIA has been passed by both the Assembly and the Senate, it will be up to the Governor to sign it into law.