

Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF THE REPRESENTATIVES
Quezon City



SIXTEENTH CONGRESS
First Regular Session

HOUSE BILL NO. 379

Introduced by CHRISTOPHER S. CO and RODEL M. BATOCABE

EXPLANATORY NOTE

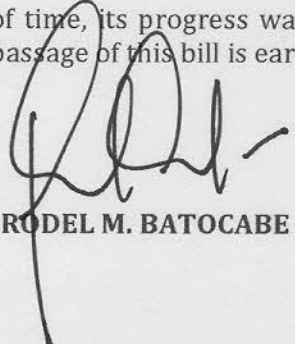
It is every one's right to have direct access to free and quality education as mandated by the Constitution, most especially the poor and the underprivileged. Not only does providing quality education a matter much to be heeded upon by the State, it also mirrors the problem of providing sustainability and productivity to one's economic life vis-a-vis the government's as well. At most, all levels of education must be granted to a qualified beneficiary – a high school graduate belonging to a family living below the poverty line as determined by the National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA), or living within a budget of roughly PhP6,870 for a family of six. The beneficiary would have the right to choose the public or state college or university of his choice within the city, province or region, as the case maybe, for purposes of enjoying the free college education benefit. In the same vein, the college authorities are obligated, under pain of administrative sanctions, to admit the qualified beneficiary.

Given the present business practice that places a premium on formal post-secondary education or college training, and given the sheer number of graduates of our public school system, this proposed legislation is a first concrete step towards providing the deserving graduates of our public high schools with appropriate quality college education keyed to the demands of a highly competitive market place.

The bill was filed in the 15th Congress but for lack of time, its progress was halted at the committee level. In light of all these circumstances, the swift passage of this bill is earnestly sought.



CHRISTOPHER S. CO



RODEL M. BATOCABE

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AN ACT
ESTABLISHING AND PROVIDING FOR FREE COLLEGE EDUCATION TO ONE (1) PUBLIC HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATE IN A FAMILY, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the Philippines in Congress assembled:

SECTION 1. *Title* – This Act shall be known as the “Free College Education to Public High School Graduates Act of 2013”,

SEC. 2. *Declaration of Policy* – It is the policy of the State to provide quality education to all qualified citizens at all levels of education and to establish a system of grants, subsidies and incentives which shall be available to deserving students, especially the poor and underprivileged, in order to give them an opportunity to be included in the academe.

SEC. 3. *Definitions* – For Purposes of this Act:

- (a) “*Free College Education*” shall mean any four-year college degree course or program offered in or conducted by State colleges and universities;
- (b) “*State Colleges and Universities*” refers to institutions of higher learning, including specialized schools, maintained and funded by government;
- (c) “*Qualified Beneficiaries*” shall mean all graduates of public high schools;
- (d) “*Tuition Fee*” shall refer to the fee representing direct costs of instruction and training facilities;
- (e) “*Other School Fees*” refers to those fees which cover the other necessary costs supportive of instruction, including, but not limited to medical and dental, athletic, library and laboratory fees.

However, fees related to membership in students’ organizations or college activities may be collected, provided that non-payment of these fees shall not in any case prejudice the enrolment or graduation of a qualified beneficiary.

SEC. 4. *Implementation of Free College Education* – The system of Free College Education as provided in this Act, shall commence in the School Year following approval of this Act. Qualified beneficiaries intending to enrol in any course offerings in state colleges and universities shall be free from payment of tuition and other school fees and shall be entitled to such other incentives or subsidies as may be granted in accordance with such rules and regulations to be promulgated to carry out the provisions of this Act: *Provided*, that nothing in this Act shall cause or authorize the reduction or removal of any benefit which the national or local government may be granted to the students prior to the enactment of this Act.

SEC. 5. *Formulation of a Four (4) Year College Curriculum* – The Commission on Higher Education (CHED) shall formulate a four-year college curriculum geared to provide students with highly competitive education and training thereby making them vulnerable to the high demands of society.

SEC. 6. *Limitation* – The right of any student to avail of free college education shall terminate if he fails for two (2) consecutive semesters in the majority of the subjects in which he is enrolled during the course of his study.

SEC. 7. *Place of Study and Admission* – The qualified beneficiary shall take his free college education in state colleges or universities of his choice situated in the city or province where he resides.

Should there be no state college or university in the city or province where he resides or where the university or college facilities cannot accommodate all qualified beneficiaries, the student may take his free college benefit in any college or university within the region nearest to his place of residence. In the absence of public universities or colleges within the region of his residence, the qualified student beneficiary may avail of the privilege in any public or state college or university in any region nearest to the province where he resides.

SEC. 8. *Obligation of State Colleges* – The State colleges or universities have the obligation to admit qualified beneficiaries, subject only to limitation of funding and facilities. A violation of this obligation shall constitute a ground for dismissal of the school authorities concerned.

SEC. 9. *Implementing Rules and Regulations* – The CHED, in accordance with the association of state colleges and universities shall issue the necessary implementing rules and regulations within one hundred twenty (120) days from effectivity of this Act.

SEC. 10. *Funding* – Adequate funds shall be earmarked by the President from available funds in the National Treasury for the initial implementation of this Act. The President shall likewise utilize for the purpose available funds or savings of the CHED or the Department of Education. Funds needed for the ensuing fiscal years for the implementation of this Act shall be included in the appropriations of State universities and colleges in the General Appropriations Act.

SEC. 11. *Repealing Clause* – All laws or parts thereof inconsistent with any provision of this Act shall be deemed repealed or modified as the case may be.

SEC. 12. *Effectivity* – The Act shall take effect immediately upon its publication in two (2) newspapers of general circulation.

Approved.