

Republic of the Philippine
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Quezon City

SIXTEENTH CONGRESS
First Regular Session

House Bill No. **2784**



INTRODUCED BY REP. ROMAN T. ROMULO

EXPLANATORY NOTE

The 1987 Constitution mandates the State "to protect and promote the right of all citizens to quality education at all levels and to take appropriate steps to make education accessible to all." (Art XIV Sec 1).

Various international instruments, such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, and the Convention on the Rights of the Child, to which the Philippines is a signatory, have also declared education as a right and not just a privilege. Hence, the country is duty-bound to provide free, quality, and accessible education.

However, considering the rising cost of education, especially college education, more and more high school graduates find it impossible to enroll in college or drop out and fail to earn a degree.

Data from the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) showed that enrollees in higher education institutions (HEIs) from 2001 to the present have reached 2.56 million, but the dropout rate reached an alarming 83.7 percent. This means that the country is producing 2.13-million college dropouts annually.

CHED records also showed that enrollment in higher education has not been encouraging as it slowed down from 1999 to 2002, and then dropped gradually starting 2002 to 2003, with negative 0.8 percent growth in 2004-2005 for both public and private schools. Except for the big jump in 1998-1999, enrollment has been sliding down, thereafter. Moreover, higher education enrollment even in state universities and colleges shows a decelerating trend, weakening to negative 1.2 percent growth in 2004-2005, despite the lower cost of public education. In the case of private schools, the decline started as early as 2002.

Based on the Commission's 2008 data, out of 100 Grade 1 pupils, only 66 finish Grade 6 and only 58 of them enroll in first year high school. Of the 58, only 43 finish high school. However, only 23 of the 43 who finished high school enroll in college and only 14 of the 23 eventually graduate from college.

Also disturbing is the National Statistics and Coordination Board (NSCB) data on the ratio of graduates to enrollment for higher education, which stands at 16 to less than 18 percent from 1994 to 2005. In the past 10 years, the NSCB reported that the total number of college graduates increased by an average of only 2.9 percent. The number of graduates also increased to only 481,862 in Academic Year 2009-2010 from 363,640 in AY 2000-2001.

Considering that more than 26.5 percent or 3.8 million Filipino families are living below the poverty line, as reported by the NSCB 2009 Poverty Statistics and released in February 2011, access to tertiary education for bright and deserving children of these families would be almost impossible, especially if they do not have the means to pay even for an entrance examination, which is the initial step towards admission to a college degree program.

Thus, this bill aims to ensure that poor but deserving high school graduates are given equal opportunities in applying for college admission to higher education institutions by removing the first hindrance at the entry level, such as the prohibitive cost of entrance examinations.

In view of the foregoing reasons, immediate approval of this measure is earnestly sought.



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Republic of the Philippines
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HOUSE BILL NO. 2784

Introduced by REP. ROMAN T. ROMULO

AN ACT

GRANTING FREE COLLEGE ENTRANCE EXAMINATIONS TO GRADUATING HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS, HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATES, COLLEGE ENTRANTS OR TRANSFEREES APPLYING FOR ADMISSION IN PUBLIC HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS AND TO UNDERPRIVILEGED GRADUATING PUBLIC HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS, HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATES, COLLEGE ENTRANTS OR TRANSFEREES APPLYING FOR ADMISSION IN PRIVATE HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS

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

SECTION 1. *Short Title.* This Act shall be known as the "Free College Entrance Exam Act."

SEC. 2. *Declaration of Policy.* It is hereby declared the policy of the State to expand and further democratize access to quality education at the college level by instituting mechanisms that protect the rights of underprivileged but bright and deserving high school graduates.

The exemption from the imposition of entrance examination fees is one such mechanism that will ensure that underprivileged, but bright and deserving high school graduates, are given adequate assistance and equal opportunity to pursue their dreams of obtaining a college education.

SEC. 3. *Definition of Terms.* For Purposes of this Act, the following terms shall mean:

- a) *College Entrance Examinations* – shall refer to examinations required by higher education institutions on graduating high school students or high school graduates as one of the criteria for determining admission to a four-year or five-year college degree program in the said educational institutions;
- b) *Underprivileged Public High School Graduates* – shall refer to public high school students whose parents live below the poverty line or belong to the poorest of the poor, as determined by the National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA) and the National Household Targeting System of the Department of Social Welfare and Development, who are the qualified beneficiaries of this Act;
- c) *Higher Education Institution (HEI)* – shall refer to an educational institution that is legally authorized to offer a program of education leading to the conferment of a degree.

SEC. 4. Coverage. All state universities and colleges (SUCs), local colleges and universities (LUCs), special public HEIs and CHED supervised HEIs offering degree-granting programs are hereby required to provide free college entrance examinations to graduating high school students, high school graduates, college entrants and transferees who are applying for college admission.

All private colleges, universities or institutions of higher education or degree-granting programs are hereby required to provide free entrance examinations to underprivileged public high school students, high school graduates, college entrants and transferees applying for college admission.

SEC. 5. Qualification Requirements of Free College Entrance Examination Beneficiaries in SUCs and LCUs. A student beneficiary eligible under this Act shall have the following entry requirements:

- a) Must be a natural-born Filipino citizen; and
- b) Must be a graduating high school student or high school graduate, college entrant or transferee and intends to enroll in any public HEI.

SEC. 6. Qualification Requirements of Free College Entrance Examination Beneficiaries in Private HEIs:

- a) Must be a natural-born Filipino citizen;
- b) Must be enrolled in a public high school; and
- c) Must have parents or guardians living below the poverty line as determined by the NEDA and DSWD.

SEC. 7. Penalties. Any HEI official or employee and other concerned individuals found guilty of violating the provisions of this Act shall suffer the penalty of *prision correccional* or imprisonment from six (6) months and one (1) day to six (6) years and a fine of Seven Hundred Fifty Thousand Pesos (P750,000.00).

In addition, the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) may impose disciplinary sanctions against any HEI official or employee violating the provisions of this Act pursuant to Section 13 of Republic Act No. 7722, otherwise known as the Higher Education Modernization Act of 1994.

SEC. 8. Implementing Rules and Regulations. The CHED, in coordination with the DepED, Philippine Association of State Universities and Colleges (PASUC), the Coordinating Council of Private Educational Associations (COCOPEA), and the Association of Local Colleges and Universities (ALCU), shall issue the necessary rules and regulations for the effective implementation of this Act.

SEC. 9. Separability Clause. If any provision of this Act is declared unconstitutional or invalid, the other sections or provisions not otherwise affected shall continue to be in full force and effect.

SEC. 10. *Repealing Clause.* All laws, executive orders, decrees, instructions, rules and regulations contrary to or inconsistent with any provision of this Act are hereby amended, repealed or modified accordingly.

SEC. 11. *Effectivity Clause.* This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its publication in at least two (2) newspapers of general circulation.

Approved,