

Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Quezon City, Metro Manila

SIXTEENTH CONGRESS
Third Regular Session

HOUSE BILL NO. 6386



Introduced by Representative Roman T. Romulo
Lone District of Pasig City

EXPLANATORY NOTE

"The test of our progress is not whether we add more to the abundance of those who have much, it is whether we provide enough for those who have too little."

-Franklin D. Roosevelt

This representation is truly grateful and humbled by the support given by the 16th Congress in the passage of the Iskolar ng Bayan Law and the Unified Student Financial Assistance for Tertiary Education (UniFAST) Act. All of these laws started from my hope and vision of someday making it possible for education to be free for those who cannot afford it.

Granting that the Constitution mandates that basic education be free for all, there has been a clamor for our public higher educational institutions (HEIs) to offer tertiary education that is also free for all. However, given the current profile of students enrolled in our different state universities and colleges, it appears that not all students enrolled come from the poorest of the poor to whom the State is bound to provide access to education. For the State to subsidize the education of all, including those who have the means to pay for tertiary education will result in **social equality** thereby widening even more the gap between the rich and the poor.

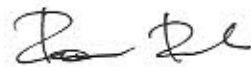
No less than the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) said that, *"Given the highly inequitable structure of Philippine society - where opportunities are highly skewed against the poor and the cash strapped lower middle class - we contend that government subsidy for the deserving poor must be higher*

than for non-poor students. In fact, the poor must be fully subsidized while those with the economic means to pay for their entire education many times over must share the cost of their education, through the payment of tuition, differentiated by social class"

In view of the above-mentioned considerations, this representation seeks to continue to move for free education for those who need it most by mandating the State to provide free college education to all students coming from families with a gross monthly income of fifty thousand pesos (Php50,000.00) or less. The amount is pegged at fifty thousand pesos, above the minimum wage, so as to include children of our nurses, teachers, etc. Aside from those who are underprivileged, I also sought to specifically extend the benefits of free college education to their children because they are the typical tax paying middle class citizens who we all wish to empower. With a tight budget to pay for rent, food, utilities, allowance and transportation, truly it is about time for the State to give back and help them in ensuring that their children be able to obtain the graduate degree that they need for purposes of employment and financial security for their respective families.

Truly, this is another measure that brings life to the saying that, *"Those who have less in life should have more in the law."*

In view of the foregoing, approval of this bill is earnestly sought.



ROMAN T. ROMULO

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AN ACT PROVIDING FREE COLLEGE EDUCATION FOR
STUDENTS COMING FROM FAMILIES WITH GROSS MONTHLY
INCOME OF FIFTY THOUSAND PESOS (PHP50,000.00) AND
BELOW IN STATE UNIVERSITIES AND COLLEGES, AND
APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR

*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 Act*";

Section 2. *Declaration of Policy*. - It is the declared policy of the State to promote social justice and pursuant thereto, provide all Filipino citizens access to quality education;

Section 3. *Coverage of Free College Education*. - Tuition, miscellaneous and other school fees of qualified student beneficiaries under this Act shall be fully subsidized by the national government when he or she enrolls in college or in courses in pursuance of a bachelors degree, certificate degree, or any comparable undergraduate degree in any state university or college (SUC). The cost of living allowance needed to ensure that a student finishes his/her selected program as well as other educational expenses may also be included subject to availability of funds;

Section 4. *Qualified Beneficiaries*. - All students enrolled or about to enroll in any state university or college coming from families with a gross monthly income of fifty thousand pesos (Php50,000.00) shall be entitled to free college education as defined in the previous section: Provided, That beneficiaries shall remain in good academic standing;

Section 5. *Recourse of Unqualified Students*. - For unqualified students such as those enrolled in private universities or colleges, or those coming from families whose monthly gross income is above fifty thousand pesos

(Php50,000.00) who wish to avail of free college education or other financial assistance may resort to similar benefits provided for under R.A. No. 10648 otherwise known as the Iskolar ng Bayan Act or R.A. No. 10687 otherwise known as Unified Financial Assistance for Students in Tertiary Education (UniFAST) Act, as the case may be;

Section 6. *Role of the Commission on Higher Education (CHED).* The CHED shall determine the qualified beneficiaries under this Act through its Office of Student Services (OSS). The CHED Chairperson shall include in the regular functions of the OSS the following additional functions:

- (a) To plan, implement and monitor yearly work programs, evaluate and submit annual reports in pursuance to the objectives of this Act;
- (b) To screen applicants, receive documentary proof, and identify who are eligible for free college education based on the provisions of this Act;
- (c) To issue the proper certification which constitutes proof of qualification for free college education which qualified beneficiaries shall present upon enrollment with a guaranty that the tuition, miscellaneous and other school fees shall be paid by CHED;
- (d) To maintain and regularly update, on a per semester basis, the list of the beneficiaries of this Act and to review, evaluate and assess their academic standing;
- (e) To monitor the extent of implementation of this Act and to impose penalties on violators of this Act; and
- (f) To perform such other functions as may be determined by the CHED Chairperson.

Section 7. *Role of State Universities and Colleges* – State universities and colleges shall be required to accept students for enrollment upon presentation and submission of the certification issued by the CHED that they have met the qualifications under this Act: Provided, That all SUCs shall not refuse enrollment should there be delay in payment on the part of the CHED: Provided further, That SUCs are prohibited to collect any form of payment from qualified beneficiaries with an agreement to reimburse the same upon payment of the CHED;

Section 8. *Payment by the CHED.* - The CHED shall ensure full payment of tuition, miscellaneous and other school fees of all qualified beneficiaries under this Act due to the state universities and colleges concerned within thirty days upon submission of their claims. Educational expenses and cost of living allowance shall be directly given to qualified students subject to such rules and regulations to be promulgated by CHED.

Section 9. *Appropriations.* - The amount of Fifteen Billion Pesos (Php 15,000,000,000.00) shall be initially appropriated from the Social Fund of the Office of the President to implement the provisions of this Act. Thereafter,

such amount necessary to effectively carry out the provisions of this Act shall be included in the annual General Appropriations Act;

Section 10. *Implementing Rules and Regulations.* - The CHED shall promulgate the implementing rules and regulations to ensure the efficient and effective implementation of this Act within sixty (60) days from the effectivity of this Act;

Section. 11. *Separability Clause.* - Should any part of this Act be declared unconstitutional, the rest of the provisions of this Act shall continue to be in effect;

Section. 12. *Repealing Clause.* - All laws, decreed and orders or parts thereof which are contrary to or inconsistent with this Act are hereby repealed, amended or modified accordingly. Nothing in this Act shall affect the existing scholarship and financial assistance programs being implemented by other government agencies.

Section. 13. *Effectivity.* - This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days following its complete publication in the Official Gazette or in at least two (2) newspapers of general circulation, whichever comes earlier.

APPROVED,