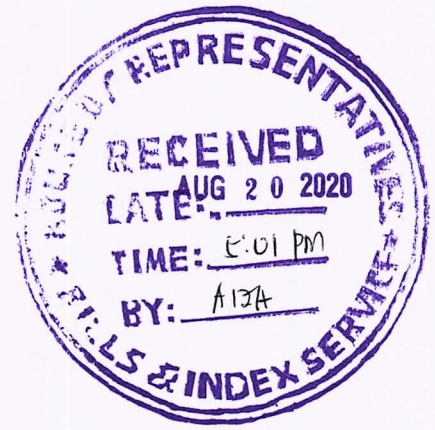


Republic of the Philippines
House of Representatives
Quezon City, Metro Manila

EIGHTEENTH CONGRESS
Second Regular Session

House Bill No. 7446



**INTRODUCED BY
REP. ALFRED VARGAS**

AN ACT
TO PROVIDE MORE SCHOLARSHIPS FOR THE CONTINUITY OF
COLLEGE EDUCATION OF STUDENTS WHOSE HEAD OF FAMILIES ARE
DIRECTLY AND INDIRECTLY AFFECTED BY THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC,
EXPANDING THE COVERAGE OF REPUBLIC ACT 10687 OTHERWISE
KNOWN AS THE UNIFIED STUDENT FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE SYSTEM
FOR TERTIARY EDUCATION (UNIFAST) LAW, APPROPRIATING FUNDS
THEREFOR, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES

EXPLANATORY NOTE

No doubt, COVID19 has disrupted our lives in more ways than one. The initial round of assistance that were given by the government through its Social Amelioration Programs (SAP) was meant to help the vulnerable sectors tide things over. These are the no-work-no-pay heads of households, jeepney and tricycle drivers, construction workers, and the pre-identified families belonging to the 4Ps among others.

However, as things drag on and without a vaccine to protect us against this disease, more and more sectors are added on to the list of those negatively affected and desperately needing help. The slower government acts, the more lives are in peril. We talk about those who have lost their jobs due to business closure, franchise non-renewal, Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs) who had to come home as there is no work opportunities for them abroad anymore and are having difficulties finding jobs here, and teachers from private educational institutions who might be laid off due to the decline in their school's enrollment. There is a huge chance that the education of children of these parents, including those hospitalized or orphaned due to COVID-19 will be discontinued. There are already reports

that enrollment in universities and colleges especially those private institutions have gone down.

This bill hopes to shoot two birds with one stone. Labelled the “Sagip Kolehiyo Act” it hopes to provide:

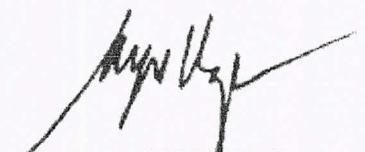
One, enrollment and schooling assistance to the college-student-children of OFWs and other workers who were laid off because of the economic slowdown; and

Two, support and hopefully boost the enrollment of private higher education institutions enough to keep it from closing down so that they are able to continue to hire their faculty members and prevent more people from falling through the cracks of unemployment and poverty.

The existing Republic Act No. 10687 entitled “An Act Providing for a Comprehensive and Unified Student Financial Assistance (UNIFAST) System for Tertiary Education” already provides college assistance for indigent students. However, per conversation with Commission on Higher Education (CHED) officials, the program is currently limited to those belonging to poor families and thus do not necessarily address the lacking support for the new sectors of society made vulnerable by the COVID-19 pandemic. This bill therefore mandates to expand its coverage especially at this time of public health and economic crisis..

At P5 Billion pesos per semester, we shall be able to help approximately 100,000 students continue their college education. We must act fast now. Time is not on our side.

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



ALFRED VARGAS

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

SECTION 1. Title. – This Act shall hereinafter be referred to as the “*Sagip Kolehiyo Act*”.

SECTION 2. Declaration of Policy. – It is hereby declared the policy of the State to promote social justice and pursuant thereto, provide all its citizens access to quality education. Towards this end, the State shall provide adequate funding and such other mechanisms to increase the participation rate among all socioeconomic classes in Tertiary Education.

SECTION 3. Eligible Beneficiaries. – The Sagip Kolehiyo Program shall be made available to all Filipino students whose parents or heads of household fall in any of the following categories:

- a) No-work-no pay workers;
- b) Jeepney and tricycle drivers;
- c) Formerly regularly employed but are now laid off due to business closure or retrenchment;

- d) Hospitalized or have died because of COVID-19;
- e) Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs) who could not find immediate local employment.

Each eligible student shall be entitled to a maximum assistance of Fifty Thousand Pesos (P50,000.00) per semester or enrollment in a College, University, or TESDA-accredited institution .

SECTION 4. Appropriations. – The amount of Five Billion Pesos (P5,000,000,000.00) is hereby appropriated as additional, top-up fund for the UniFAST Program set aside as part of government's COVID-19 response to assist students.

SECTION 5. Implementation. – Designing the program, tracking, and monitoring tasks shall be taken on by the UniFAST Board in accordance with government set rules and standards.

SECTION 6. Implementing Rules and Regulations. – Within fifteen (15) days from the effectivity of this Act, the UniFAST Board shall consult with the local government leagues, and officials from the Bureau of Treasury, Department of Finance, Department of Budget and Management and other stakeholders, and promulgate the Implementing Rules and Regulations necessary for the proper implementation of this Act.

SECTION 7. Separability Clause. – If, for any reason, any provision of this Act is declared unconstitutional or invalid, parts or provisions of this Act which are not affected shall continue to be in full force and effect.

SECTION 8. Non-Impairment Clause. – Nothing in this Act shall be construed as to diminish, impair, or repeal rights recognized, granted, or made available to disadvantaged, marginalized, or specific sectors under existing laws.

SECTION 9. Repealing Clause. – All laws, executive orders, presidential decrees, Implementing Rules and Regulations inconsistent with this Act are hereby repealed or modified accordingly.

SECTION 10. Effectivity. – This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its publication in the Official Gazette or in two (2) newspapers of general circulation.

Approved,