

Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Quezon City

EIGHTEENTH CONGRESS
Second Regular Session

HOUSE BILL NO. 9776



Introduced by Representative Mercedes “Didi” C. Cagas

AN ACT
ESTABLISHING THE COMMISSION ON THE ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN,
MINORITIES, AND PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES IN SCIENCE, ENGINEERING,
AND TECHNOLOGY DEVELOPMENT, AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR

EXPLANATORY NOTE

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development envisions “a world of universal respect for human rights and human dignity, the rule of law, justice, equality and non-discrimination; of respect for race, ethnicity and cultural diversity; and of equal opportunity permitting the full realization of human potential and contributing to shared prosperity.” This vision is reflected in several Sustainable Development Goals on equal access to education, gender equality, decent work for all and equal pay, and equal opportunity for all.

Article II, Section 9 of the 1987 Constitution provides that “The State shall promote a just and dynamic social order that will ensure the prosperity and independence of the nation and free the people from poverty through policies that provide adequate social services, promote full employment, a rising standard of living, and an improved quality of life for all.” Section 14 “recognizes the role of women in nation-building, and shall ensure the fundamental equality before the law of women and men.” Moreover, Section 22 “recognizes and promotes the rights of indigenous cultural communities within the framework of national unity and development.”

Non-discrimination and gender equality policies are further reinforced in the enactment of the Magna Carta for Women (Republic Act No. 9710), the Indigenous People’s Rights Act (Republic Act No. 8371), and the Magna Carta for Disabled Persons (Republic Act No. 7277), among others.

However, women, minorities and persons with disabilities are still being underrepresented in scientific, engineering, and technology development occupations as few earn bachelors, masters, and doctoral degrees in these fields. Among those who do are less likely to be employed full-time.

While progress has been made in recent years, common recruitment hiring practices that make extensive use of traditional networks often overlook the available pool of women,

minorities and persons with disabilities in the field of science, engineering, and technology development. Once on the job, many faces sexual harassment, allegations of reverse discrimination, different standards for judging their work, lower salary, or inequitable job assignments. They, to a greater extent, find limited opportunities for advancement or promotion to management positions.

This bill seeks to establish a commission that would examine these issues and help focus attention on the importance of eliminating artificial barriers to the recruitment, retention, and advancement of women, minorities and persons with disabilities in the fields of science, engineering, and technology development, and in all employment sectors of the Philippines; promote workforce diversity; sensitize employers on the need to recruit and retain women, minorities and persons with disabilities that are scientists, engineers, and computer specialists; encourage the replication of successful recruitment and retention programs by universities, corporations, and agencies in employing women, minorities and persons with disabilities.

It is for the foregoing reason that the immediate passage of this bill is earnestly sought.


MERCEDES "DIDI" C. CAGAS

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

SECTION 1. *Short Title.* – This Act shall be known as the “Commission on the Advancement of Women in Science, Engineering, and Technology Development Act.”

SEC. 2. *Commission on the Advancement of Women in Engineering, Science, and Technology Development.* – There shall be established a “Commission on the Advancement of Women in Science, Engineering, and Technology Development,” referred in this Act as the ‘Commission’.

SEC. 3. *Duty of the Commission.* – The Commission shall review the available research, and if deemed necessary, conduct additional research to:

- (a) Identify the number of women, minorities, and individuals with disabilities in the Philippines in specific types of occupations in science, engineering, and technology development;
- (b) Examine the preparedness of women, minorities, and individuals with disabilities to pursue careers in the fields of science, engineering, and technology development and to advance to positions of greater responsibility within the academia, industry, and government;

- (c) Describe the practices and policies of employers and labor unions relating to the recruitment, retention, and advancement of women, minorities, and individuals with disabilities in the fields of science, engineering, and technology development;
- (d) Identify the opportunities for, and artificial barriers to, the recruitment, retention, and advancement of women, minorities, and individuals with disabilities in the fields of science, engineering, and technology development;
- (e) Compile a synthesis of available research on lawful practices, policies, and programs that have successfully led to the recruitment, retention, and advancement of women, minorities, and individuals with disabilities in the fields of science, engineering, and technology development;
- (f) Issue recommendations with respect to lawful policies that Government, academia, and private industry can follow regarding the recruitment, retention, and advancement of women, minorities, and individuals with disabilities in the fields of science, engineering, and technology development;
- (g) Identify the disincentives for women, minorities, and individuals with disabilities to continue graduate education in the fields of science, engineering, and technology development;
- (h) Identify university undergraduate programs that are successful in retaining women, minorities, and individuals with disabilities in the fields of science, engineering, and technology development;
- (i) Identify the disincentives that lead to a disproportionate number of women, minorities, and individuals with disabilities leaving the fields of science, engineering, and technology development before completing their undergraduate education; and
- (j) Evaluate the benefits of family-friendly policies in order to assist recruiting, retaining, and advancing women, minorities, and individuals with disabilities in the fields of science, engineering, and technology development.

SEC. 4. Membership. – The Commission shall be composed of six (6) members to be appointed by the President, as follows:

- (a) Two (2) members from among for-profit entities that hire individuals in the fields of engineering, science, or technology development;
- (b) Two (2) members from among institutions in education or academia in the fields of life science, physical science, or engineering; and
- (c) Two (2) members from among non-governmental organizations, people's organizations or any similar entities that promote and advance the welfare of women, minorities, and individuals with disabilities.

The Secretary of the Department of Science and Technology shall automatically seat as Chairperson of the Commission in an *ex-officio* capacity. Each member shall be appointed for the life of the Commission. A vacancy in the Commission shall be filled in the manner in which the original appointment was made. Members shall not be paid by reason of their service on the Commission. Each member shall receive travel expenses, including per diem in an amount to be determined by existing law. A majority of the members of the commission shall constitute a quorum for the transaction of business.

The Commission shall meet not fewer than five (5) times in connection with and pending the completion of the report described in this Act. The Commission shall hold additional meetings for such purpose if the Chairperson or a majority of the members of the Commission requests additional meetings in writing.

SEC. 5. *Directors and Staff of the Commission; Experts and Consultants.* –

- (a) Director. – The Commission shall appoint and fix the pay of Director and additional personnel as the Commission considers appropriate.
- (b) Experts and Consultants. – The Commission may procure temporary and intermittent services to assist in the discharge of the Commission's functions.

SEC. 6. *Powers of the Commission.* –

- (a) *Hearings and Sessions.* – The Commission may, for the purpose of carrying out this Act, hold hearings, sit and act at times and places, take testimony, and receive evidence as the Commission considers appropriate. The Commission may administer oaths or affirmations to witnesses appearing before it.
- (b) *Powers of Members and Agents.* – Any member or agent of the Commission may, if authorized by the Commission, take any action which the Commission is authorized to take by this section.
- (c) *Obtaining Official Data.* – The Commission may secure directly from any department or agency information necessary to enable it to carry out this Act. Upon request of the Chairperson of the Commission, the head of that department or agency shall furnish that information to the Commission.
- (d) *Mails.* – The Commission may use mails in the same manner and under the same conditions as other departments and agencies of the government.
- (e) *Contract Authority.* – To the extent provided in advance in appropriations Acts, the Commission may contract with and compensate government and private agencies or persons for the purpose of conducting research or surveys necessary to enable the Commission to carry out its duties under this Act.

SEC. 7. *Report.* – Not later than one (1) year after the date on which the initial appointments are complete, the Commission shall submit to the President and the Congress a written report containing the findings, conclusions, and recommendations of the Commission resulting from the study conducted under Section 3.

SEC. 8. *Construction; Use of Information Obtained.* – Nothing in this Act shall be construed to require any non-governmental entities such as business, college or university, foundation, or research organization to provide information to the Commission concerning such entity's personnel policies, including salaries and benefits, promotion criteria, and affirmative action plans. No information obtained from any entity by the Commission may be used in connection with any employment related litigation.

SEC. 9. *Termination; Access to Information.* – The Commission shall terminate thirty (30) days after submitting the reports required in this Act. On or before the date of the termination of the Commission, the Commission shall provide to the Department of Science and Technology the information gathered by the Commission in the process of carrying out its duties under this Act. The department shall act as a central repository for such information and shall make such information available to the public, including making such information available through Internet.

SEC. 10. *Review of Information Provided by the Department of Science and Technology and Other Agencies.* –

- (a) *Provision of Information.* – At the request of the Commission, the DOST and any other department or agency shall provide to the Commission any information determined necessary by the Commission to carry out its duties under this Act, including-data on academic degrees awarded to women, minorities, and individuals with disabilities in science, engineering, and technology development and workforce representation and the retention of women, minorities, and individuals with disabilities in the fields of science, engineering, and technology development; and
- (b) *Review of Information.* – The Commission shall review any information provided and shall include in the report required under Section 7 on how to correct any deficiencies in the collection of the types of information described in that subsection, and in the analysis of such data, which might impede the characterization of the factors which affect the attraction and retention of women, minorities, and individuals with disabilities in the field of science, engineering, and technology development.

SEC. 11. *Authorization of Appropriations.* – These are authorized to be appropriated to carry out this Act –

- (a) Five Million Pesos (P5,000,000.00) for the fiscal year during which this Act is approved; and
- (b) Five Million Pesos (P5,000,000.00) for next succeeding fiscal year.

SEC. 12. *Repealing Clause.* – All laws, decrees, executive orders, proclamations, rules and regulations, and other issuances, or parts thereof which are inconsistent with the provisions of this Act, are hereby repealed or modified accordingly.

SEC. 13. *Separability Clause.* – If any provision of this Act shall be held unconstitutional or invalid, the other provisions not otherwise affected shall remain in full force and effect.

SEC. 18. *Effectivity Clause.* – This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days following its complete publication in the Official Gazette or in two (2) national newspapers of general circulation.

Approved,