



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

NINETEENTH CONGRESS
First Regular Session

HOUSE BILL No. 5428



Introduced by HONORABLE ERNESTO “ERNIX” M. DIONISIO, JR.

**AN ACT EXEMPTING QUALIFIED INDIGENTS FROM THE PAYMENT OF
PROFESSIONAL EXAMINATION FEES AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES**

EXPLANATORY NOTE

Education is a very important aspect of one's life. In the Philippines, education is something that we set as our priority and the dreams and goals of every parent for their children. According to the Philippine Statistics Authority, about 91.6% of Filipinos are functional literate in 2019¹.

The 1987 Constitution² states that: the State shall protect and promote the right of all citizens to quality education at all levels and shall take appropriate steps to make such education accessible to all. Further, the Constitution³ also provides that: The State shall give priority to education, science and technology, arts, culture, and sports to foster patriotism and nationalism, accelerate social progress, and promote total human liberation and development.

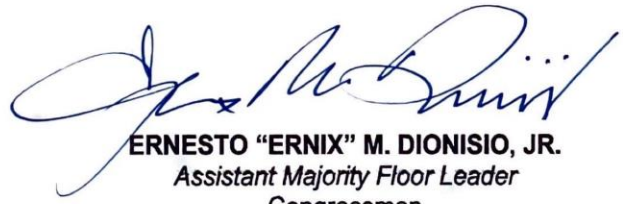
After graduation and getting a degree, the expenses thereon do not stop. In some instances, before being able to practice a certain profession, an additional professional examination is required. These examinations are an additional burden and expense to ordinary Filipino people. As an example, in the recent 2020_21 Bar Examination, the amount needed to be paid to take the exam was Php 10,000.00. All these additional professional examinations are not the only expense paid, there are still expenses to be paid like fees for enrolling in review centers and other daily expenses.

This bill aims to grant qualified indigents free fees for professional examinations. In order to be exempt from paying the said fee, a person qualified must present his or her certification of indigence issued by the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD). This bill is necessary to give assistance and to lighten the expenses to be incurred by an indigent person who seeks to take any professional examination.

¹ Functional Literacy Rate is Estimated at 91.6 Percent in 2019 available at <https://psa.gov.ph/content/functional-literacy-rate-estimated-916-percent-2019> (last accessed on September 25, 2022).

² Article XIV, Section 1, 1987 Constitution.

³ Article II, Section 17, 1987 Constitution.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Ernesto M. Dionisio, Jr.', with a stylized flourish at the end.

ERNESTO "ERNIX" M. DIONISIO, JR.

Assistant Majority Floor Leader
Congressman
First Congressional District of Manila



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

Sec. 1. Short Title. - This Act shall be known as the *“Free Professional
Examinations For Indigents Act.”*

Sec. 2. Declaration of Policy. - It is the declared policy of the State to promote full employment and to provide equal employment opportunities for all. Towards this end, the State shall enact measures to ensure that aspiring professionals are shielded from the financial burden of licensure examination fees.

Sec. 3. Requirements for Availment. - For purposes of availing the benefits of this Act, an examinee shall secure a certification from the DSWD that he/she is a qualified indigent. Such certification shall be presented to the PRC, CSC or other certifying body, as the case may be, in lieu of the payment of examination fees; *Provided*, that a first time applicant may be entitled to 100% of the examination fees; *Provided, further*, that in the event that the examinee needs to retake the professional examination, he/she shall only be entitled to assistance equivalent to 50% of the examination fee for the second take, and no other subsidy shall be given for further retake.

Sec. 4. Interpretation in Favor of the Applicant. - In all cases, any ambiguity in the interpretation of the provisions of this Act shall be in favor of the applicant. No agency shall issue unduly restrictive regulations which will render nugatory the benefits provided under this Act. such shall constitute an administrative offense punishable under the Administrative Code and other pertinent laws.

Sec. 5. Information, Education and Communication (IEC) Campaign. - The Committee, in coordination with the Philippine Information Agency (PIA) and the IBP, shall conduct regular information, education and communication (IEC) campaigns in

order to inform potential beneficiaries of the procedures and guidelines in availing the benefits of this Act. As far as practicable, such IEC campaigns shall be made available in print, television, radio broadcast and online platforms, with appropriate translation into regional languages.

Sec. 6. Non-Duplication of Benefits. - Examinees who are already receiving similar benefits under other laws and programs of the government shall not be entitled to the benefits of this Act. However, nothing herein shall diminish or decrease the benefits received by the beneficiaries under pertinent laws, rules and regulations.

Sec. 7. Exceptions. - The waiver of fees under this Act shall not include those collected in connection with an application to take other examinations, such as specialization examinations administered by professional organizations, and the fees relating to the application for a driver's license.

Sec. 8. Non-Authority to Charge Fees. - This Act shall not be construed as an implied authority for government agencies to impose or collect charges and fees in the discharge of their functions with regard to the administration of professional examinations, if no such authority is already granted under their respective charters or other relevant laws.

Sec. 9. Appropriations. - An amount necessary for the initial implementation of this Act shall be charged against the respective budgetary allocations of the concerned government agencies, subject to the usual budgeting, accounting and auditing rules and regulations. Thereafter, an amount necessary for the proper implementation of this Act shall be included in the annual General Appropriations Act.

Sec. 11. Implementing Rules and Regulations (IRR). - In addition to the rules to be formulated as provided under Section 4 of this Act, the Committee, upon proper consultation with relevant stakeholders, shall also formulate the rules and regulations for the effective implementation of this Act, within ninety (90) days from its effectivity.

Sec. 12. Separability Clause. - If any provision of this Act is declared unconstitutional or invalid, the other provisions not affected by such declaration shall remain in full force and effect.

Sec. 13. Repealing Clause. - Any law, decree, ordinance or administrative circular not consistent with any provision of this Act is hereby amended, repealed or modified accordingly.

Sec. 14. Effectivity Clause. - This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its publication in the Official Gazette or in at least two (2) newspapers of general circulation.

Approved,