

Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Quezon City

19TH CONGRESS
Second Regular Session

House Bill No. **10199**



Introduced by Representative **MICHAEL L. ROMERO**

AN ACT
ESTABLISHING A POST-BACCALAUREATE SCHOLARSHIP AND RETURN
SERVICE PROGRAM FOR DESERVING STUDENTS, AND APPROPRIATING
FUNDS THEREOF

EXPLANATORY NOTE

The 1987 Constitution mandates the State to 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, protect and promote the right of all citizens to quality education at all levels, and take appropriate steps to make such education accessible to all.

Moreover, the State is mandated to give priority to research and development, invention, innovation, and their utilization; and to science and technology education, training, and services.

On July 25, 2016, R.A. 10931, *The Universal Access to Quality Tertiary Education Act* was enacted, mandating the State to take appropriate steps in making education accessible to all. On December 23, 2020, R.A. 11509, *The Doktor Para sa Bayan Act* was enacted, promoting the right to health of the people through the formulation and implementation of policies and strategies for the appropriate generation, recruitment, retraining, regulation, retention and reassessment of the health workforce making it more attuned to the needs of the population.

However, rapid globalization, technological advancements, and the surge of COVID-19 permanently changed the global atmosphere. In avoidance of history repeating itself, it is imperative that research and development and science and technology be at the forefront of education. According to 2020 CHP of Philippine Statistics Report (PSA), with reference Number 2023-22 dated July 4, 2023¹, of **22,870,213 households** pursuing college and university degrees, **only 327,063**

¹ Literacy Rate and Educational Attainment Among Persons Five Years Old and Over in the Philippines (2020 Census of Population and Housing) available at <https://psa.gov.ph/content/literacy-rate-and-educational-attainment-among-persons-five-years-old-and-over-philippines> (last accessed on 20 March 2024).

households or one point four percent (1.4%) continued on Post-Baccalaureate studies in the fields of science and technology.

This house bill seeks to expand R.A. 10931 and R.A. 11509, to extend to all fields of study concerning Post-Baccalaureate or Post-Graduate degrees.

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

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Michael L. Romero', written over a horizontal line.

MICHAEL L. ROMERO Ph.D.
Representative
1-PACMAN Partylist

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*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 ***“Professional
Education for All Subsidy Act”***.

SECTION 2. Declaration Of Policy. The State, adhering to the 1987 Constitution, reaffirms education as a priority, extending its commitment to include the advancement of professionals through further education in fields critical to national development, such as law, engineering, and research. The Act aims to support these professionals in their pursuit of postgraduate studies, recognizing their role in driving innovation, economic growth, and societal progress.

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.

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.

Science and technology are essential for national development and progress. The State shall give priority to research and development, invention, innovation, and their utilization; and to science and technology education, training, and services. It shall support indigenous, appropriate, and self-reliant scientific and technological capabilities, and their application to the country's productive systems and national life.

Towards this end, the State shall establish a Post-Baccalaureate or Post-Graduate scholarship and return service that will grant deserving students to pursue Post-Baccalaureate or Post-Graduate studies to foster patriotism through a mandatory return service in all government sectors, local or national. This shall ensure the availability of highly skilled and trained professionals who shall be integrated in government service.

SECTION 3. Establishment of the Post-Baccalaureate Scholarship and Return Service Program. - There shall be established a Post-Baccalaureate Scholarship and Return Service Program (PBSRS) Program for deserving students in State-owned and controlled universities and colleges (SOCUCs) or in Private Higher Education institutions (PHEIs).

The Commission on Higher Education (CHED) may consult with the Department of Health (DOH), Department of Education (DEPED), Department of Science and Technology (DOST), Legal Education Board (LEB), and other agencies as may be deemed appropriate.

SECTION 4. Coverage. - The PBSRS Program established under this Act shall be made to deserving Filipino students who want to pursue any Post-Baccalaureate or Post-Graduate Degree.

The student financial assistance for the PBSRS Program shall include the following:

- (a) Free tuition and other school fees;
- (b) Allowance for prescribed books, supplies and equipment;
- (c) Clothing or uniform allowance;
- (d) Allowance for dormitory or boarding house accommodation;
- (e) Transportation allowance;
- (f) Internship fees, including financial assistance during mandatory internship;
- (g) Bar Examination, Civil Service Commission, or Board Examination review fees; and
- (h) Other education-related miscellaneous subsistence or living allowances.

SECTION 5. Qualification Requirements. - An applicant for the PBSRS Program shall possess the following qualifications:

- (a) Must be a Filipino citizen residing in the Philippines;
- (b) Must be a graduate of an appropriate Bachelor of Science Program in the study of Technology, Engineering, Science, Law, or Business, from any Higher Educational Institution duly recognized by the CHED;
- (c) Must have passed the entrance examination and complied with other related requirements for admission into a Post-Baccalaureate or Post-Graduate degree in the SOCUC or PHEI where the scholar intends to enroll, as well as the other requirements as may be prescribed by law;

Further, The Commission on Higher Education (CHED), in collaboration with the Department of Education (DEPED), the Department of Science and Technology (DOST), the Legal Education Board (LEB), shall establish criteria for eligibility and the application process for the subsidy. Priority shall be given to applicants demonstrating outstanding academic performance, commitment to serving the Philippine society, and enrollment in programs aligned with national development goals.

SECTION 6. Conditions for the Grant of Scholarship. - Deserving students accepted to the PBSRS Program shall be subject to the following conditionalities:

- (a) Must sign an agreement stating the terms and conditions of the scholarship on a form prescribed by the CHED and DEPED, pursuant to the provisions of this Act;
- (b) Must carry the full load of subjects prescribed per semester by the SOCUC or PHEI, and shall not, under any circumstance, drop a course which will result in underloading;
- (c) Must finish the entire Post-Baccalaureate or Post-Graduate degree within the prescribed time frame of the SOCUC or the PHEI where the scholar is enrolled in, subject to the retention policies of the SOCUC or the PHEI: Provided, that the deserving student accepted to the PBSRS Program, before actual enrollment in the first semester as a scholar, may be allowed for valid and justifiable reasons, to defer enrollment or to file a leave of absence: Provided, further, That a scholar who is already enrolled, may be allowed, for valid and justifiable reasons, to file a leave of absence; and
- (d) Must render return of service as provided under Section 8 of this Act.

The scholar who fails to pass any mandated licensure examination, including the Bar Examinations, required within one (1) year after graduation of said Post-Baccalaureate or Post-Graduate degree and other academic requirements shall shoulder all the necessary expenses for any succeeding professional licensure examinations.

SECTION 7. Disqualifications. - The scholarship grant shall terminate, and the scholar shall repay the full cost of scholarship and related benefits received, including all the expenses incurred during the participation in the scholarship program in case of the following circumstances:

- (a) If the scholar accepts another scholarship from other government or private agency or entity while enjoying the benefits under this Act;
- (b) If the scholar fails to meet the academic requirements or to complete the course within the prescribed period without valid cause as may be determined by the SOCUC or PHEI, the CHED, the LEB, DEPED, or any concerned agency through appropriate regulations, such as, but not limited to, absence without notice, willful neglect or other causes within the control of the scholar;

- (c) If the scholar fails to obtain a passing grade in any licensure examination within two (2) years from the time the scholar has graduated from his/her program: Provided, That, instead of repaying the full cost of the scholarship and related expenses, the scholar whose scholarship status has been terminated under Section 7(b) or 7(c) of this Act may opt to engage in work within any governmental sector, including but not limited to works for Social Welfare and Development for a period prorated to the number of years of mandatory return service provided under this Act; and
- (d) While being a scholar, the scholar commits gross misconduct in a manner that would bring significant damage to the SOCUC or PHEI concerned or to the community as a whole.

SECTION 8. Mandatory Return Service and Integration Program into the Government Sector (MRSIP). - Upon passing any Mandated Licensure Exam (MLE) administered by any of the bodies of the government and conferment by of the license to practice, or conferment of any Post-Baccalaureate or Post-Graduate degree, the scholar shall be integrated into government service, through any branch of the government as may be determined in the IRRs, and shall receive the appropriate civil service rank, salary and related benefits.

The scholar shall serve in the Philippine government for at least one (1) year for every scholarship year availed of, contributing to national development through their expertise. The CHED shall monitor the compliance of subsidy recipients with this service obligation.

The scholar shall render the mandatory return service within one (1) year from the time of passing any MLE pursuant to this Act: Provided, however, That in times of any public emergency, the any appropriate body of the government may require the scholars to serve in any sector where their services may be needed: Provided further, That the number of years served by the scholar in any governmental sector shall be counted in the required number of years of return service under this Act: Provided, finally, That the scholar shall receive appropriate salaries and other benefits for service rendered under the mandatory integration into the governmental service, pursuant to the IRRs.

SECTION 9. Sanctions. - A scholar who has availed of the PBSRS Program but fails or refuses to comply with the mandatory return service and integration provided under this Act shall be required to pay two (2) times the full cost of scholarship, including other benefits and expenses incurred by reason of participation in the PBSRS Program.

In case of nonpayment, as provided in the preceding paragraph, the PRC, the Supreme Court, or any regulatory agency authorized to issue any Mandated License may deny the renewal of the scholar's license and impose sanctions thereto: Provided, That the abovementioned penalties shall not apply to scholars

who fail to comply with the required return service on account, or by reason of, any exculpatory circumstances provided by law.

For scholars who obtain any PBSRS Program, where no MLE is required by law or otherwise, who fail to comply with the Mandatory Return Service and Integration, the CHED or other governing bodies may file the appropriate civil or administrative action.

SECTION 10. Role of the CHED, DEPED, and LEB. - The CHED, the DEPED, and the LEB shall perform the following functions in the implementation of the PBSRS Program:

- (a) Conduct regular information dissemination of, and recruitment to, the PBSRS Program in SOCUCs and PHEIs, in all the municipalities and provinces;
- (b) Review, modify and enhance curriculum standards to prepare graduates to work in community-based programs and to ensure that any Post-Baccalaureate or Post-Graduate program remains up-to-date and are of comparable quality to Post-Baccalaureate and Post-Graduate education in other countries;
- (c) Together with the DOH, DOST, and DSWD, develop programs for the continuous training of scholars while serving the mandatory return service under this Act;
- (d) Coordinate with the SOCUCs and PHEIs, for the integration of the scholar into the government service system;
- (e) Formulate, promulgate, disseminate and implement the necessary policies, standards, guidelines and rules and regulations for the effective implementation of the PBSRS Program under this Act;
- (f) Require SOCUCs and PHEIs to implement and submit a tracking, monitoring, evaluation and assistance system in order to determine the whereabouts of the scholars after graduation from SOCUCs or PHEIs;
- (g) Ensure the timely and adequate release to partner-SOCUCs and PHEIs of the funds necessary for the implementation of the PBSRS Program, and monitor the timely and adequate release of the same by the partner-SOCUCs and PHEIs to the scholar-beneficiaries under the PBSRS Program; and
- (h) Recommend, in coordination with partner-SOCUCs and PHEIs, to the DBM the amount necessary for the effective implementation of this Act.

SECTION 11. Role of the SOCUCs and PHEIs. - The SOCUCs and PHEIs shall perform the following functions in the implementation of the PBSRS Program:

- (a) Monitor the progress of all scholars in their respective educational institutions, identify those who have low or failing grades, and counsel them to improve their academic performance;
- (b) Coordinate with the CHED and LEB to ensure the timely release and accurate distribution of allowances and other fees to the scholars;

- (c) Make an annual report to the CHED and LEB on the performance of medical scholars and other necessary or vital information regarding the PBSRS Program;
- (d) Assist the CHED and LEB in the conduct of regular information dissemination on, and recruitment to, the PBSRS Program;
- (e) Review, modify and enhance the educational curriculum to prepare the scholars to work in government or community-based programs;
- (f) Recommend strategies to CHED to improve the implementation of the PBSRS Program;
- (g) Conduct a tracer study on the whereabouts of their respective scholars after graduation from their institution and submit the results thereof to the CHED and LEB;
- (h) Recommend to the CHED and the DBM the budget necessary to implement the PBSRS Program in their respective institutions, based on their projected capacity and evaluation of the adequacy of the funding under this Program; and
- (i) Perform such other functions as may be deemed necessary for the success of the PBSRS Program.

SECTION 12. Funding. - The amount necessary to carry out the implementation of this Act shall be charged against the current year's appropriation of the participating SOCUC, PHEI, LEB and CHED.

Funds for the implementation of this subsidy shall be sourced from the current appropriations of the LEB and CHED, supplemented by allocations from the General Appropriations Act. The government may also explore partnerships with the private sector to expand the funding base for this initiative.

SECTION 13. Transitory Provisions. Upon the effectivity of this Act, current scholars under any existing Post-Baccalaureate or Post-Graduate Study of any participating SOCUC or PHEI shall automatically be eligible to avail the benefits under this Act.

SECTION 14. Joint Congressional Oversight Committee on PBSRS Program. There is hereby created a Joint Congressional Oversight Committee to oversee, monitor and evaluate the implementation of this Act.

The Oversight Committee shall be composed of five (5) members each from the Senate and from the House of Representatives, and shall include the following: Chairperson of the Senate Committee on Higher, Technical and Vocational Education; Chairperson of the House Committee on Higher and technical Education; Chairperson of the Senate Committee on Science and Technology; Chairperson of the House Committee on Science and Technology; and three (3) members each to be chosen from the membership of the Senate Committee on

Higher, Technical and Vocational Education, and the House Committee on Higher and Technical Education by the Senate President and the House Speaker, respectively: Provided, That at least one (1) member from the respective nominees of the House of Representatives and the Senate shall be chosen from the Minority party or bloc.

SECTION 15. Determination of Number and Allocation of Scholars to be Admitted. Every five (5) years from the effectivity of this Act, the CHED, DOST, PRC, and LEB shall, upon assessing the shortage of qualified governmental workforce in the country, and upon consultation with participating SOCUCs and PHEIs, the DBM shall determine the number and geographical allocation of scholars to be admitted every school year: *Provided*, That in determining the allocation quota of the scholars to be admitted to the Program, utmost priority is given to regions with the low Post-Baccalaureate and Post-Graduate students.

SECTION 16. Implementing Rules and Regulations. - Within one hundred twenty (120) days from the effectivity of this Act, the CHED shall, in coordination with the Philippine Association of State Universities and Colleges, Coordinating Council of Private Educational Associations, League of Municipalities, PRC, DBM, SOCUCs, PHEIs, and other relevant stakeholders, formulate and issue the rules and regulations to fully implement the provisions of this Act: *Provided*, That the absence of the implementing rules and regulations shall not affect the effectivity of this Act and the grant of benefits provided therein.

SECTION 17. Separability Clause. - If any part or provisions of this Act shall be held invalid or unconstitutional, the other parts or provisions hereof that are not affected shall remain in full force and effect.

SECTION 18. Repealing Clause. - All laws, decrees, or rules inconsistent with this Act are hereby repealed or modified accordingly.

SECTION 19. Effectivity. - 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,