Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Quezon City

NINETEENTH CONGRESS
Third Regular Session

HOUSE BILL NO. **10878**

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
E-Filed
RECEIVED
DATE September 9, 2024
TIME 1:49 pm
BY Reli
BILLS AND INDEX SERVICE

Introduced by: **REP. SALVADOR A. PLEYTO, SR.**

EXPLANATORY NOTE

This proposed measure aims to respond to the emerging need for law professionals in the country who will provide legal assistance to underprivileged citizens in conflict with the law.

To do so, a Legal Scholarship and Return Service Program shall be established in State Colleges and Universities and in private Higher Educational Institution offering Juris Doctor degree. This would enable deserving students who wish to become lawyers to realize their dreams.

This scholarship program is open to qualified and deserving students pursuing to be a lawyer but are financially incapacitated. In return for the scholarship given, the grantee, upon passing the bar examinations, shall render service as a public attorney or as public interest lawyer.

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

SALVADOR A. PLEYTO, SR.

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HOUSE BILL NO. **10878**

Introduced by: **REP. SALVADOR A. PLEYTO, SR.**

AN ACT ESTABLISHING A LEGAL SCHOLARSHIP AND RETURN SERVICE PROGRAM FOR DESERVING STUDENTS, AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR

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 "Legal Scholarship and Return Service Act of 2024".

SEC. 2. *Declaration of Policy* – It is the policy of the State to:

a) 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.

b) 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.

c) Establish and maintain a system of scholarship grants, student loan programs, subsidies, and other incentives which shall be available to deserving students in both public and private schools, especially to the underprivileged.

d) Ensure that no person shall be deprived of life, liberty, or property without due process of law, nor shall any person be denied the equal protection of the laws.

e) Guarantee that all persons have free access to the courts and quasi-judicial bodies and adequate legal assistance shall not be denied them by reason of poverty.

f) Secure that any person under investigation for the commission of an offense shall have the right to be informed of his right to remain silent and to have competent and independent counsel preferably of his own choice. If the person cannot afford the services of counsel, he must be provided with one.

g) Make sure that no person shall be held to answer for a criminal offense without due process of law.

h) Guarantee that all persons shall have the right to a speedy disposition of their cases before all judicial, quasi-judicial. or administrative bodies.

SEC. 3. *Establishment of the Legal Scholarship and Return Service Program.* – A Legal Scholarship and Return Service Program (LSRS) shall be established in state colleges and universities (SUCs) or in partner private higher educational institutions (PHEIs) offering Juris Doctor degree, for qualified and deserving students. The Commission on Higher Education shall identify one (1) partner Higher Educational Institution (HEI) in every region, upon consultation with the Department of Justice (DOJ) and the Legal Education Board (LEB). *Provided,* That priority in the selection of recipients for the LSRS Program shall be given to:

a) Member of the Indigenous Cultural Communities / Indigenous Peoples;

b) Those who belong to the marginalized sectors: and

c) Applicants who come from cities/municipalities with limited number of practicing public interest lawyers.

SEC. 4. *Coverage* – The LSRS Program established under this Act shall be awarded to qualified and deserving Filipino students who want to pursue a degree in Juris Doctor. The scholarship grant shall include the following:

a) Full tuition and miscellaneous fees;

b) Allowance for books and reading materials;

c) Allowance for board and lodging;

d) Allowance for transportation; and

e) Bar review fees.

SEC. 5. *Qualification Requirements* – An applicant for the LSRS must be:

a) A graduate of a bachelor's degree recognized as a prerequisite for a Juris Doctor degree. *Provided,* That qualified and deserving higher year levels of the Juris Doctor program shall be covered under this Act;

b) Eligible to enroll in the SUC or PHEI by passing its entranced exam and has complied with all the requirements for admission.

c) A Filipino citizen residing in the Philippines;

d) Of good moral character;

e) From middle-middle to low-income household.

SEC. 6. *Condition of Scholarship* – Accepted students are subject to the following terms and conditions:

a) Must sign the LSRS Agreement form containing the terms and conditions of the scholarship;

b) Must carry a full load every semester;

c) Must finish the degree within the prescribed time frame of the SUC or PHEI. *Provided,* That leave of absence may be allowed for valid and justifiable reasons by must still be subject to the retention policy of the SUC or PHEI;

d) Must take the bar examination within a year after graduation; and

e) Must render the return service as provided under Section 8 of this Act.

SEC. 7. *Disqualification* – The scholarship grant shall be terminated, and the scholar shall repay the full cost of the scholarship in case of the following circumstances:

a) If the scholar accepts another scholarship from another government or private agency organization;

b) If the scholar fails to meet the academic requirements to complete the course within the prescribed period set by the SUC or PHEI;

c) If the scholar is convicted of a crime involving moral turpitude; and

d) If the scholar commits gross misconduct to the detriment of the community and the reputation of the school.

SEC. 8. *Mandatory Return Service* – Upon passing the bar examination and signing the roll of attorneys, the scholar shall render a continuous service of five (5) years as a public attorney at the Public Attorney's Office in a city or municipality within the region where the scholarship grant was obtained, or as a public interest lawyer at a legal aid organization approved by the Department of Justice.

The area of assignment for the mandatory Return Service shall be determined by the PAO Regional Office. *Provided,* That a scholar mat opt to start the mandatory service immediately after graduation or awaiting the result of the bar examination.

SEC. 9. *Sanctions* – A lawyer or a graduate who has availed the LSRS Program but fails or refuses to comply with the mandatory return service provided under this Act shall be required to pay tow (2) times the full cost of scholarship.

SEC. 10. *Funding* – The fund necessary for the implementation of this Act shall be included in the annual budget of the SUC. CHED and the DOJ.

SEC. 11. *Implementing Rules and Regulations* – Within sixty (60) days from the effectivity of this Act, the CHED, DOJ and the Legal Education Board, in consultation with the Integrated Bar of the Philippines and reputable law schools, shall promulgate the implementing rules and regulations for the effective implementation of this Act.

SEC. 12. *Separability Clause* – If for any reason any provision of this Act is declared invalid or unconstitutional, the remaining provisions not otherwise affected shall remain valid and subsisting.

SEC. 13. *Repealing Clause.*- All laws, presidential decrees, executive orders, ordinances, rules and regulation, and other issuances or part thereof which are inconsistent with this Act, are hereby repealed or modified accordingly.

SEC. 14. *Effectivity* – This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its publication in the Official Gazette or in a newspaper of general circulation.

Approved.