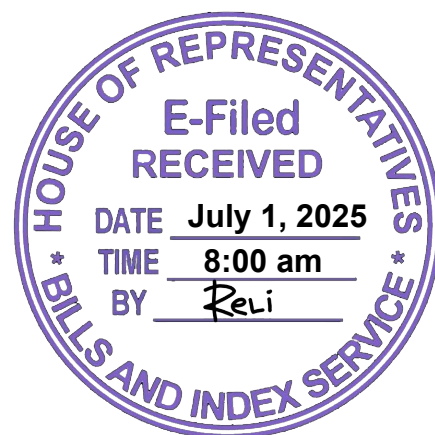


Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Quezon City, Metro Manila

TWENTIETH CONGRESS
First Regular Session

HOUSE BILL NO. 683



Introduced by Representative Roman T. Romulo

EXPLANATORY NOTE

This proposed measure seeks to amend Republic Act 10931, or the “Universal Access to Quality Tertiary Education Act,” to strengthen access to quality education for poor, academically qualified students by instituting a voucher system and enhancing the tertiary education subsidy (TES).

In its Year 2 Report, the Second Congressional Commission on Education (EDCOMII) found that the enrollment in private higher education institutions (HEIs) among individuals from the poorest 60% of the population (first to sixth decile) increased between 2014 and 2022, while enrollment from the wealthiest segment declined by over 10% during the same period.¹

This issue was further worsened by findings that TES increasingly benefited places with no SUCs or LUCs (PNSLs), regardless of the beneficiaries’ income levels. As a result, the share of TES grants awarded to the poorest households significantly declined from 74.24% in AY 2018-2019 to merely 30.74% in AY 2022-2023, while the proportion of PNSL grantees increased to 69.26%.²

The bill broadens access by allowing financially disadvantaged but academically qualified students to receive vouchers for enrollment in private HEIs or TVIs even in areas with existing SUCs or LUCs. It also prohibits TES recipients from availing of the voucher program to ensure equitable distribution of resources and prevention of duplication of benefits. It further establishes cost benchmarks by mandating a national cost study to determine the value of vouchers for private HEIs and TVIs, subject to review every three years.

¹ Second Congressional Commission on Education (EDCOMII), *Fixing the Foundations: A Matter of National Survival* (EDCOMII, January 27, 2025), p. 178

² Ibid, p.183.

This proposed measure expands educational choices for low-income students, especially in underserved areas, ensures fair and needs-based subsidy distribution, and enhances coordination with private education institutions to meet student demand.

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

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Roman T. Romulo', with a stylized flourish at the end.

ROMAN T. ROMULO
Lone District, Pasig City

“(I) *POOR AND ACADEMICALLY QUALIFIED STUDENT* REFERS TO A STUDENT WHO BELONGS TO A HOUSEHOLD RANKED AS “POOR” BY THE DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL WELFARE AND DEVELOPMENT BASED ON PROOF OF INCOME AS PRESENTED TO THE UNIFAST BOARD, AND WHO CONSISTENTLY MEETS THE ACADEMIC RETENTION REQUIREMENTS OF THE CONCERNED HEI OR TVI FOR A REGULAR UNIT LOAD:

1 xxx

2 “(L) *PROOF OF INCOME* REFERS TO ANY DOCUMENTATION USED
3 TO VERIFY, AUTHENTICATE, OR ASSESS THE ANNUAL INCOME
4 OF A PERSON OR HOUSEHOLD;

5 “(M) *PROPORTIONAL BUDGETARY ALLOCATION* REFERS TO A
6 BUDGETARY ALLOCATION WHICH SHALL SUBSIDIZE THE FULL
7 COST OF TUITION AND MISCELLANEOUS FEES IN THE FORM OF
8 PORTABLE VOUCHERS FOR POOR AND ACADEMICALLY
9 QUALIFIED STUDENTS;

10 xxx

11 “(Y) *VOUCHER SYSTEM* REFERS TO A SYSTEM THAT GRANTS
12 PORTABLE VOUCHERS TO POOR AND ACADEMICALLY
13 QUALIFIED STUDENTS PRIOR TO THE START OF THE ACADEMIC
14 YEAR TO ALLOW THEM TO STUDY OR TRANSFER TO PRIVATE
15 HEIs OR PRIVATE TVIs IN CITIES AND MUNICIPALITIES WHERE
16 THERE ARE EXISTING SUCs, LUCs, AND PUBLIC TVIs.”

17 **SEC. 3.** Section 3 (i) and (j) are amended to be denominated as Section 3 (j)
18 and (k) respectively. Section 3 (k) to (u) are amended to be denominated as Section
19 3 (n) to (x).

20 **SEC. 4.** Section 7 of Republic Act No. 10931 is hereby amended to read as
21 follows:

22 “SEC. 7. TERTIARY EDUCATION SUBSIDY (TES) for Filipino
23 Students. - To support the cost of tertiary education or any part or
24 portion thereof, a TES is hereby established IN ALL SUCs, LUCs,
25 PRIVATE HEIs, and TVIs for all Filipino students who [shall] enroll in
26 THE FIRST undergraduate-post-secondary TERTIARY EDUCATION
27 program[s] [of SUCs, LUCs, private HEIs, and all TVIs] OF THEIR
28 CHOICE. The TES shall be administered by the UniFAST Board and
29 the amount necessary to fund the TES shall be included in the
30 RESPECTIVE budgets of the CHED and the TESDA: Provided, That
31 prioritization shall be given to students in the following order: (a)
32 students who are part of households included in the UPDATED
33 Listahanan [2.0] 3, LAUNCHED ON AUGUST 1, 2022 BY THE
34 DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL WELFARE AND DEVELOPMENT, ranked
35 according to the estimated per capita household income; and (b)

1 students not part of the Listahanan [2.0] 3, ranked according to
2 estimated per capita household income based on [submitted
3 documentation of] THE proof of income to be determined by the
4 UniFAST Board: Provide{.} *further*, That such prioritization shall not
5 apply to Filipino students in cities and municipalities with no existing
6 SUC or LUC campus AND PUBLIC TVI: PROVIDED, *FINALLY*, THAT
7 FILIPINO STUDENTS ENROLLED IN UNDERGRADUATE
8 PROGRAMS IN PRIVATE HEIs IN CITIES AND MUNICIPALITIES
9 WHERE AN SUC OR LUC EXISTS, BUT DOES NOT OFFER
10 COMPARABLE OR EQUIVALENT DEGREE PROGRAMS, SHALL BE
11 ELIGIBLE FOR TES.

12 "TO SUPPORT THE COST OF TERTIARY EDUCATION OR
13 ANY PART OR PORTION THEREOF, [T]he TES may, among others,
14 [and to support the cost of tertiary education or any part or portion
15 thereof,] cover the following:

16 "(a) Tuition and other school fees in private HEIs, and private [or
17 LGU-operated] TVIs, which shall be equivalent to the tuition and other
18 school fees of the nearest SUC or state-run TVI in their respective areas;

19 "(b) [An] [a] Allowances for books, School supplies, transportation
20 TO AND FROM SCHOOL, and [miscellaneous personal expenses
21 including a] reasonable allowance for the documented rental or
22 purchase of a [personal computer or laptop] DESKTOP OR PORTABLE
23 COMPUTER, WHEN APPLICABLE [and other education-related
24 expenses];

25 "(c) An allowance for room and board costs TO BE incurred by
26 the student, WHEN APPLICABLE;

27 "(d) XXX

28 "(e) XXX

29 "ALL TES BENEFICIARIES SHALL CONTINUE TO RECEIVE
30 SUCH BENEFITS OR SUBSIDY UNTIL THEY COMPLETE THEIR
31 POST- SECONDARY TECHNICAL-VOCATIONAL COURSE OR
32 HIGHER. EDUCATION DEGREE PROGRAM: PROVIDED, THAT
33 THEY COMPLY WITH RESIDENCY REQUIREMENTS IN
34 ACCORDANCE WITH THE RULES OF THE HEIs AND TVIs."

1 **SEC. 5.** A new Section denominated as Section 7A is hereby inserted after
2 Section 7 of Republic Act No. 10931 to read as follows:

3 “SEC. 7A. VOUCHER SYSTEM FOR POOR AND
4 ACADEMICALLY QUALIFIED STUDENTS OF PRIVATE HEIs AND
5 TVIs, - THERE SHALL BE A PROPORTIONAL BUDGETARY
6 ALLOCATION TO SUPPORT POOR AND ACADEMICALLY
7 QUALIFIED STUDENTS THROUGH A PORTABLE VOUCHER
8 SYSTEM TO BE ADMINISTERED BY THE UNIFAST BOARD THAT
9 SHALL ALLOW BENEFICIARIES TO STUDY IN PRIVATE HEIs AND
10 PRIVATE TVIs IN CITIES AND MUNICIPALITIES WHERE THERE ARE
11 EXISTING SUCs, LUCs, AND PUBLIC TVIs.

12 “THE ELIGIBILITY OF STUDENTS UNDER THE VOUCHER
13 SYSTEM SHALL BE DETERMINED BY THE UNIFAST BOARD,
14 BASED ON REASONABLE ECONOMIC AND ACADEMIC
15 QUALIFICATIONS, NOT LATER THAN THE START OF THE
16 ACADEMIC YEAR AS DETERMINED BY THE CHED, AND, IN THE
17 CASE OF TECHNICAL-VOCATIONAL STUDENTS, NOT LATER
18 THAN THE PERIOD DESIGNATED BY THE TESDA, AND PRIOR TO
19 THE START OF THE SPECIFIC TRAINING PROGRAM OR COURSE.

20 “STUDENTS OF PRIVATE HEIs AND PRIVATE TVIs WHO ARE
21 TES GRANTEES CAN NO LONGER QUALIFY FOR THE VOUCHER
22 SYSTEM. ALL VOUCHERS ISSUED UNDER THIS ACT SHALL BE
23 USED EXCLUSIVELY FOR THE PURPOSE OF ASSISTING POOR
24 AND ACADEMICALLY QUALIFIED STUDENTS WHO OPT TO STUDY
25 IN PRIVATE HEIs AND PRIVATE TVIs IN CITIES AND
26 MUNICIPALITIES WHERE THERE ARE EXISTING SUCs, LUCs, AND
27 PUBLIC TVIs.

28 “FOR THIS PURPOSE, AND WITHIN SIXTY (60) DAYS FROM
29 THE EFFECTIVITY OF THIS ACT, THE UNIFAST BOARD SHALL
30 COMMISSION A STUDY TO DETERMINE THE APPROPRIATE COST
31 OF TUITION AND MISCELLANEOUS FEES FOR PRIVATE HEIs AND
32 TVIs IN THE COUNTRY, WHICH SHALL BE THE NOMINAL VALUE
33 OF THE VOUCHER UNDER THE SYSTEM. THE AMOUNT OF
34 TUITION AND MISCELLANEOUS FEES SHALL BE REVIEWED
35 EVERY THREE (3) YEARS TO ALLOW FOR ADJUSTMENTS DUE TO
36 INFLATION.”

1 **SEC. 6.** Within sixty (60) days from the effectivity of this Act, the CHED shall
2 issue the rules and regulations as may be necessary to implement the provisions of
3 this Act.

4 **SEC. 7** Republic Act No. 10931, otherwise known as the “Universal Access to
5 Quality Tertiary Education Act”, is hereby amended. All laws, presidential decrees,
6 executive orders, rules and regulations, and issuances or parts thereof which are
7 inconsistent with the provisions of this Act are repealed, amended or modified
8 accordingly.

9 **SEC. 8.** Notwithstanding the non-issuance of its implementing rules and
10 regulations, this Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its publication in the Official
11 Gazette or in a newspaper of general circulation.

Approved,