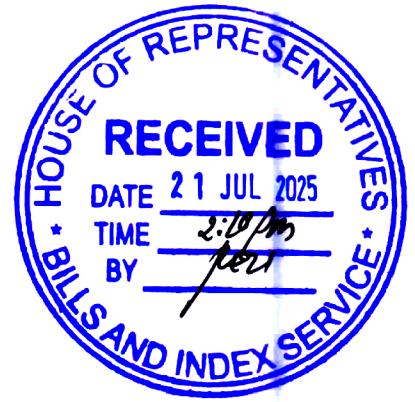




Republic of the Philippines  
**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**  
Quezon City

**20<sup>th</sup> CONGRESS**  
1st Regular Session

**HOUSE BILL NO. 2134**



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Introduced by **REPRESENTATIVE JENNIFER A. LAGBAS**

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#### **EXPLANATORY NOTE**

Recently, the Philippine education system has undergone major reforms, most notably through the K to 12 Basic Education Program, which added two years of Senior High School (SHS) to better prepare students for employment, entrepreneurship, middle-level skills development, or higher education. Despite this, college education remains largely structured around a traditional four-year model, much of which duplicates courses already covered at the SHS level. General Education (GE) courses are still being offered at the college level, and while K to 12 brought about a decrease in the number of GE courses, it was not sufficient to shorten the duration of college programs.

This bill seeks to rationalize the length and structure of college degree programs by promoting a three-year, specialization-focused curriculum for bachelor's degrees. This affirms that general education should be substantially delivered during the SHS years, allowing higher education institutions (HEIs) to dedicate college years to advanced and/or professional coursework. By doing so, the system can become more time-efficient, industry-responsive, and internationally aligned.

This measure explicitly affirms the academic freedom of HEIs, and provides flexibility in implementation timelines to allow for discipline-specific or institution-specific transitions. Meanwhile, it also ensures equal treatment between private HEIs and chartered state universities and colleges in the imposition of academic and curricular requirements.

This bill underscores the employability of SHS graduates by affirming their eligibility for jobs that do not require a college degree. It mandates concerned government agencies to update qualification standards accordingly, thereby fulfilling the original intent of the K to 12 reform.

Consistent with State's mandate to 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, this bill supports a more responsive, equitable, and efficient higher education system, one that maximizes the gains of basic education reforms while respecting institutional and professional standards.

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



**HON. JENNIFER A. LAGBAS**  
Representative  
First District, Misamis Oriental



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**AN ACT**  
**PROVIDING FOR A THREE-YEAR SPECIALIZATION-FOCUSED COLLEGE EDUCATION,**  
**ENHANCING THE EMPLOYABILITY OF K TO 12 GRADUATES, AND AUTHORIZING THE**  
**COMMISSION ON HIGHER EDUCATION TO ALLOW FLEXIBILITY IN ACADEMIC**  
**DURATION**

*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 “Three-Year College Education Act.”

**SEC. 2. *Declaration of Policy.*** — It is the policy of the State to establish, maintain, and support a complete, adequate, and integrated system of education that promotes accessible, efficient, and high-quality college education that is relevant to the needs of the people and society.

Towards this end, the State shall ensure that college education focuses on immediate specialization in the students’ chosen fields of study, following the completion of general education courses at the basic education level, without infringing on the academic freedom of higher education institutions.

**SEC. 3. *Definition of Terms.*** — As used in this Act:

- a) *Bachelor’s Degree* — shall refer to the undergraduate academic degree conferred by a higher education institution upon completing coursework, typically over a span of three to six years, depending on the field of study and condition of students;
- b) *General Education* — shall refer to the component of the curriculum oriented towards broad or wide-ranging understandings and exposes students to various domains of knowledge and ways of comprehending social and natural realities, developing in the process intellectual competencies such as critical, analytical, and creative thinking and multiple forms of expression; and civic capacities demanded of membership in the community, country, and the world;
- c) *General Education Courses* — shall refer to the courses that aim to enhance intellectual competencies, personal and civil responsibilities, and practical skills. It shall include both core courses and elective courses, which may be taught either in English or Filipino;

- d) *Higher Education Institution* — shall refer to an institution of higher learning, primarily offering bachelor's and advanced degree programs;
- e) *Professional Courses* — shall refer to the specific courses prescribed by the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) and the Professional Regulation Commission (PRC) required for licensure purposes. As distinguished from general education courses, professional courses focus on a particular discipline and are directed at more theoretical and technical knowledge;

**SEC. 4. *Nominal Duration of Bachelor's Degrees.*** - The nominal duration of any bachelor's degree program offered by higher education institutions shall not exceed three (3) academic years, except as otherwise provided by law mandating a longer duration or additional requisites for licensure purposes.

The CHED shall be authorized to allow flexibility for the degree programs to be completed in less than three (3) academic years, where appropriate: *Provided*, That the duration of such degree programs shall be determined based on assessed industry needs, international standards or benchmarks, and recognized best practices relevant to the specific degree program.

The college academic years shall be devoted exclusively to professional courses aimed at developing advanced competencies in the student's chosen field of study. Further, the CHED, in consultation with the PRC, shall issue guidelines for the recognition and structuring of applicable exceptions.

**SEC. 5. *General Education Courses in the College Curriculum.*** — General education courses shall not be required for the completion of the requirements of any bachelor's degree in higher education institutions, except as may be necessary to address specific program requirements

All requisite general education courses, including those in communication, humanities, social sciences, natural sciences, and mathematics, shall be integrated within the Senior High School (SHS) Program under the K to 12 Basic Education Curriculum.

The CHED, in coordination with the Department of Education (DepEd), shall ensure the alignment of the SHS curriculum with the knowledge base required for specialization at the college level to foster critical thinking and ensure college readiness of students, provide more time for internship and advanced specialization in higher education, enhance the overall efficiency and quality of higher learning, and avoid remedial and duplication of basic education subjects, consistent with the mandate of Republic Act No. 10533 or the "Enhanced Basic Education Act of 2013."

**SEC. 6. *Guarantee of Academic Freedom.*** — Nothing in this Act shall be construed as limiting the academic freedom of higher education institutions. In particular, no abridgment of curricular freedom of the individual educational institutions by the CHED shall be made except for setting the minimum requirements for specific academic programs and professional courses as may be stipulated by the various licensing entities. Further, no academic or curricular restriction shall be made upon private higher education institutions which are not similarly imposed on chartered state universities and colleges.

**SEC. 7. *Employment Eligibility of Senior High School Graduates.*** — Graduates of the K to 12 SHS Program who have completed the Academic, Technical-Vocational-Livelihood, Sports, or Arts and Design tracks shall be recognized as eligible for employment in occupations or positions that do not require a college degree under existing laws or industry regulations.

Government agencies, particularly the Civil Service Commission (CSC), the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE), and DepEd, shall review and, where appropriate, revise existing qualification standards to accommodate SHS graduates in entry-level government or private sector employment, consistent with existing civil service laws, labor laws, and educational standards.

Public and private employers are encouraged to promote the alignment of their hiring policies with the K to 12 Program by recognizing the competencies and qualifications of SHS graduates.

**SEC. 8. *Transitory Provision.*** - The DepEd and higher education institutions shall be given a transition period of three (3) years from the effectivity of this Act to redesign and implement their respective curricula in accordance herewith.

**SEC. 9. *Implementing Rules and Regulations.*** — Within ninety (90) days from the effectivity of this Act, the CHED, in coordination with the DepEd and the PRC, shall issue the necessary rules and regulations for its effective implementation. The rules and regulations issued pursuant to this section shall take effect thirty (30) days after its publication in a newspaper of general circulation.

**SEC. 10. *Separability Clause.*** — If any provision or part of this Act is declared invalid or unconstitutional, the remaining provisions or parts not affected shall remain in full force and effect.

**SEC. 11. *Repealing Clause.*** — All laws, decrees, orders, rules, and regulations or other issuances or parts thereof inconsistent with the provisions of this Act are hereby repealed or modified accordingly.

**SEC. 12. *Effectivity.*** — This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its publication in the Official Gazette or any two (2) newspapers of general circulation in the Philippines.

*Approved,*