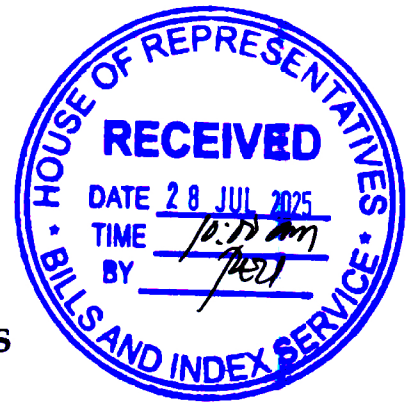




Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Quezon City



TWENTIETH (20th) CONGRESS
First Regular Session

House Bill No. **2365**

Introduced by Representative Nelson S. Legacion
3rd Congressional District, Camarines Sur

Farmers and fisherfolk, the bedrock of the Philippine food supply, regrettably remain among the nation's most marginalized sectors. Despite their profound contribution to food security, they confront pervasive challenges such as precarious incomes, heightened vulnerability to climate change impacts, and limited access to vital resources. These systemic constraints severely impede their children and dependents from pursuing and completing quality education, thereby entrenching a cycle of intergenerational poverty and discouraging future engagement in these critical industries. This unfortunate situation profoundly undermines both human capital development and the nation's long-term food resilience.

While the "Universal Access to Quality Tertiary Education Act" (Republic Act No. 10931) has laudably made tuition and miscellaneous fees free in public higher education institutions, significant financial barriers to education regrettably persist for the children of marginalized farmers and fisherfolk. These formidable barriers include essential expenses for living allowances, books, transportation, and other academic necessities. Such costs are particularly burdensome for those who choose or need to attend private educational institutions or simply cannot afford the daily expenditures associated with schooling. Furthermore, robust support for basic and technical-vocational education remains an urgent necessity.

This proposed "Farmers and Fisherfolk Educational Assistance Act" directly addresses these persistent financial barriers and aims to uplift these vital sectors. By establishing a comprehensive educational assistance program, this bill seeks to

break the cycle of poverty by empowering the next generation with educational support to pursue diverse opportunities or innovate within their sectors; ensure food security by incentivizing younger generations to contribute to agriculture and fisheries; promote social equity by providing substantial financial aid for both living essentials and private education, thereby ensuring access to quality education regardless of economic status; and ultimately, invest in national development by recognizing and developing the human capital potential of dependents from these fundamental sectors, strengthening the nation's overall socio-economic resilience. This bill establishes clear eligibility criteria, defines the scope of assistance across Senior High School, Technical-Vocational, and Higher Education levels, and outlines robust administrative and funding mechanisms. Its enactment is a strategic imperative for national development, social justice, and long-term food security.

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


NELSON S. LEGACION
Representative, 3rd District, Camarines Sur



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House Bill No. **2365**

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**AN ACT PROVIDING FOR EDUCATIONAL ASSISTANCE TO THE
CHILDREN AND DEPENDENTS OF FARMERS AND FISHERFOLK, AND
APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR**

*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 "Farmers and
Fisherfolk Educational Assistance Act."

SECTION 2. Declaration of Policy. It is hereby declared the policy of the State
to protect and promote the right of all citizens to quality education at all levels and
to take appropriate steps to make such education accessible to all. The State further
recognizes the invaluable contribution of farmers and fisherfolk to national food
security and economic development and acknowledges their vulnerability to
various socio-economic and environmental challenges. Towards this end, the State
shall adopt a comprehensive educational assistance program to uplift the lives of
children and dependents of marginalized farmers and fisherfolk, enabling them to
pursue and complete their education, thereby breaking the intergenerational cycle
of poverty and fostering a new generation of empowered citizens and
agricultural/fisheries professionals.

SECTION 3. Definition of Terms. For purposes of this Act, the following
terms shall mean:

Farmer refers to any natural person who is a tiller, farmworker, or engaged in the cultivation of land, raising of livestock, poultry, or aquaculture products as a primary source of livelihood, and who is registered with the Registry System for Basic Sectors in Agriculture (RSBSA) of the Department of Agriculture (DA).

Fisherfolk refers to any natural person who is engaged in fishing or related activities as a primary source of livelihood, including those engaged in aquaculture, and who is registered with the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR) or its equivalent LGU-based registration system.

Dependent refers to a legitimate, illegitimate, or legally adopted child of a qualified farmer or fisherfolk, who is not more than thirty (30) years of age at the time of application, unmarried, and not gainfully employed.

Educational Assistance refers to financial support provided under this Act, which may include, but is not limited to, tuition fees, miscellaneous and other school fees, board and lodging, transportation expenses, allowances for books, clothing, and food, and other similar educational expenses.

Accredited Educational Institutions refers to public or private educational institutions in the Philippines duly recognized and accredited by the Department of Education (DepEd), the Commission on Higher Education (CHED), or the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA).

Poverty Threshold refers to the minimum income required to meet basic food and non-food needs, as officially determined and updated by the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA).

SECTION 4. *Grant of Educational Assistance.* There is hereby established an Educational Assistance Program for the children and dependents of qualified farmers and fisherfolk. The assistance shall cover:

(a) Senior High School:

- (1) For enrollment in public Senior High Schools, the grant of assistance shall cover allowances for books, school supplies, transportation, and daily living expenses, but shall not fall below a minimum amount of Php10,000.00.

- (2) For enrollment in private Senior High Schools, the grant of assistance shall cover tuition and other mandatory school fees, in addition to allowances for books, school supplies, transportation, and daily living expenses, but shall not fall below a minimum amount of Php10,000.00.
- (b) Technical-Vocational Education and Training (TVET): Assistance shall cover tuition and other mandatory school fees, assessment fees, training materials, and a monthly stipend for living and transportation expenses, but shall not fall below a minimum amount of Php10,000.00.
- (c) Higher Education (College/University):
 - (1) For enrollment in State Universities and Colleges (SUCs), Local Universities and Colleges (LUCs), or State-run Technical-Vocational Institutions (TVIs), assistance shall cover allowances for books, learning materials, board and lodging, and monthly stipend for living and transportation expenses, supplementing the free tuition and other school fees provided by Republic Act No. 10931, but shall not fall below a minimum amount of Php10,000.00.
 - (2) For enrollment in private Higher Education Institutions or private TVIs, assistance shall cover tuition and other mandatory school fees, in addition to allowances for books, learning materials, board and lodging, and monthly stipend for living and transportation expenses, but shall not fall below a minimum amount of Php10,000.00.

The specific amounts for stipends and allowances, as well as the eligibility criteria for farmer/fisherfolk parents and their dependent-beneficiaries, shall be determined in the Implementing Rules and Regulations (IRR) of this Act, subject to regular review and adjustment by the administering agencies based on prevailing economic conditions and existing government scholarship rates.

SECTION 5. *Funding.* The funds required for the initial implementation of this Act shall be included in the annual General Appropriations Act for the fiscal year immediately following its approval. Thereafter, the necessary sums for the continuous operation of the Educational Assistance Program shall be annually included in the respective appropriations of the Department of Agriculture (DA), Department of Education (DepEd), Commission on Higher Education (CHED), and Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA). The implementing agencies are further authorized to seek and receive donations, grants, or endowments from local and international sources to augment the program's funds, subject to existing government accounting and auditing rules and regulations.

SECTION 6. *Penalties for Fraudulent Claims.* Any person who makes fraudulent claims or misrepresents information to avail of the benefits under this Act, or any public official or employee who conspires with or allows such fraudulent claims, shall be subject to criminal prosecution and administrative sanctions as may be prescribed in the Implementing Rules and Regulations, without prejudice to other applicable laws.

SECTION 7. *Non-Diminution of Benefits.* Nothing in this Act shall be construed to reduce, diminish, or in any way impair any existing educational benefits, scholarships, or assistance programs currently enjoyed by or available to the children and dependents of farmers and fisherfolk from other government agencies or private entities. This Act shall serve as a supplementary measure to enhance educational access.

SECTION 8. *Implementing Rules and Regulations (IRR).* Within ninety (90) days from the effectivity of this Act, the Department of Agriculture (DA), as the lead agency, in coordination with the Department of Education (DepEd), the Commission on Higher Education (CHED), the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA), the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD), the National Anti-Poverty Commission (NAPC), and representatives from accredited national farmer and fisherfolk organizations, shall jointly promulgate the necessary rules and regulations for the effective implementation of this Act.

SECTION 9. *Separability Clause.* If any provision or part of this Act is declared unconstitutional or invalid, the validity of the other provisions shall not be affected by such declaration and shall remain in full force and effect.

SECTION 10. *Repealing Clause.* All laws, presidential decrees, executive orders, memoranda, circulars, and other issuances, or parts thereof, which are inconsistent with the provisions of this Act, are hereby repealed or modified accordingly.

SECTION 11. *Effectivity.* This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its complete publication in the Official Gazette or in at least two (2) newspapers of general circulation.

Approved,