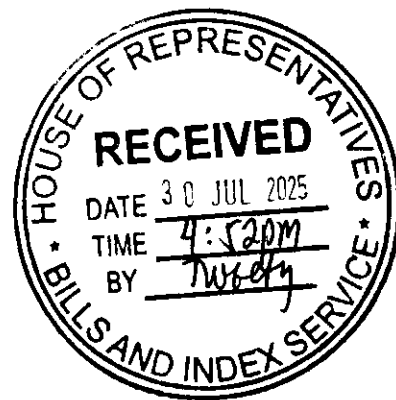




**Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Quezon City, Metro Manila**

**TWENTIETH CONGRESS
FIRST REGULAR SESSION**

House Bill No. 2709



INTRODUCED BY **Rep. ZIAUR-RAHMAN ALONTO ADIONG**

EXPLANATORY NOTE

Access to occupational and physical therapy services remains limited across many communities in the Philippines, especially in rural, geographically isolated, and disadvantaged areas. While the demand for rehabilitation services is growing due to aging populations, rising cases of disabilities, and increasing public awareness, the supply of qualified therapists remains critically low. This shortage undermines our efforts to ensure inclusive and accessible health services for all.

This bill seeks to address the national shortage of licensed occupational and physical therapists by establishing a scholarship and return service program that will support the education of deserving students who wish to pursue degrees in these vital health professions. In exchange, scholars will render return service in public hospitals, rural health units, rehabilitation centers, and other government or community-based institutions identified as high-need areas by the Department of Health (DOH), the Commission on Higher Education (CHED), and relevant agencies.

Under the proposed *Therapist Para sa Bayan Act*, scholars will receive full tuition coverage, allowances for books, supplies, board exam review, and licensure fees, as well as stipends for transportation and living expenses. In return, graduates will serve for a minimum of two years in areas identified to be underserved or lacking in rehabilitation services.

The bill also provides clear parameters on eligibility, disqualification, return service compliance, and institutional roles. It mandates coordination among CHED, DOH, PRC, DSWD, DepEd, and local government units, with priority hiring of scholars

fulfilling return service agreements. This program not only responds to urgent public health needs but also creates opportunities for talented youth, especially from marginalized backgrounds, to pursue careers that will uplift both their lives and the lives of others.

In line with the government's constitutional duty to provide accessible health care and equal opportunities for education, this measure is a strategic and socially responsive investment in human capital. The passage of this bill will help build a stronger, more inclusive health system—one that leaves no patient behind and empowers Filipino therapists to serve the nation with compassion and excellence.

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



REP. ZIAUR-RAHMAN ALONTO ADIONG
1st District, Lanao Del Sur



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**TWENTIETH CONGRESS
FIRST REGULAR SESSION**

House Bill No. 2709

INTRODUCED BY **REP. ZIAUR-RAHMAN "ZIA" ALONTO ADIONG**

**AN ACT
ESTABLISHING AN OCCUPATIONAL AND PHYSICAL THERAPY
SCHOLARSHIP AND RETURN SERVICE PROGRAM FOR DESERVING
STUDENTS, 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 "Therapist Para sa Bayan Act."

Section 2. Declaration of Policy. – It is the policy of the State to ensure equitable access to rehabilitation and allied health services, especially in underserved areas. To this end, the State shall establish an Occupational Therapy and Physical Therapy Scholarship and Return Service Program to support deserving students pursuing OT or PT education, who shall in turn serve in public health institutions and communities in need.

Section 3. Scholarship and Return Service Program. – There is hereby established a Scholarship and Return Service Program (SRSP) for deserving students who intend to pursue a Bachelor of Science in Occupational Therapy or Bachelor of Science in Physical Therapy in state universities and colleges (SUCs) or in partner private higher education institutions (HEIs) in regions where no SUC offers the said programs. The SRSP shall provide the following benefits:

- a. Free tuition and other school fees, including but not limited to: registration, library, and laboratory fees;

- b. Allowance for prescribed books, uniforms, and medical supplies;
- c. Transportation and living allowance, subject to guidelines to be issued;
- d. Allowance for licensure review and board examination fees.

Section 4. Qualifications and Requirements. – To qualify for the SRSP, an applicant must:

- a. Be a Filipino citizen residing in the Philippines;
- b. Be a graduate of a senior high school program or equivalent, or an undergraduate in good standing pursuing BS in Occupational Therapy or Physical Therapy;
- c. Have passed the entrance examination and complied with the admission requirements of the SUC or private HEI;
- d. Not be a current holder of any similar scholarship or government study grant.

Section 5. Conditions of the Scholarship. – Qualified students under the SRSP shall:

- a. Sign a scholarship agreement with the Commission on Higher Education (CHED), which shall administer the program;
- b. Carry the full academic load prescribed per semester by the curriculum of the SUC or private HEI;
- c. Complete the OT or PT degree within the prescribed period, unless granted a valid leave of absence for justifiable reasons;
- d. Take the licensure examination for Occupational Therapy or Physical Therapy within one (1) year of graduation;
- e. Render return service under Section 7 of this Act.

Section 6. Disqualification and Repayment. – A scholar shall refund the full cost of the scholarship and all related benefits if:

- a. The scholar fails to complete the course within the prescribed period without valid cause;
- b. The scholar commits acts of misconduct or violations of the agreement as determined by the administering agency or the HEI;
- c. The scholar fails or refuses to comply with the mandatory return service.

Section 7. Mandatory Return Service. – Within one (1) year from obtaining professional license, the scholar shall render at least two (2) years of return service in any of the following:

1. Government hospitals, rural health units, public rehabilitation centers, or facilities operated by the Department of Health (DOH), Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD), Department of Education (DepEd), or local government units;
2. Special education or geriatric institutions where OT/PT services are needed;
3. Other health facilities or community-based programs identified by CHED and DOH as service-priority areas.

Scholars may be appointed to such positions with corresponding salaries and benefits during their return service. Those who are not appointed within one (1) year may either:

- a. Reimburse the full cost of the scholarship; or
- b. Undertake an alternative compliance program to be formulated by CHED in consultation with relevant agencies.

To this end the DoH, DSWD, DepEd, and LGU's shall prioritize the hiring of OT's and PT's with an active RSA over similarly qualified candidates.

Section 8. Allocation and Target Areas. – CHED, shall determine the number of scholars and geographic allocation based on national and regional demand for OT or PT professionals, prioritizing underserved and disadvantaged areas.

Section 9. Monitoring and Compliance. – CHED shall monitor scholars' academic progress and return service compliance in coordination with SUCs, HEIs, DOH, and other concerned agencies. Any violation shall be subject to sanctions under Section 6.

Section 10. Sanctions for Non-Compliance. – Any licensed therapist who received benefits under the SRSP but fails or refuses to render the mandatory return service shall be required to pay twice the amount of scholarship and benefits received, unless justified by force majeure or other valid grounds beyond the scholar's control.

Section 11. Appropriations. – The amount necessary for the implementation of this Act shall be included in the annual General Appropriations Act under the budget of CHED.

Section 12. Implementing Rules and Regulations. – Within sixty (60) days from the effectivity of this Act, CHED, in consultation with DOH and PRC, shall issue the implementing rules and regulations.

Section 13. Separability Clause. – If any provision of this Act is held unconstitutional or invalid, the other provisions not affected shall remain in full force and effect.

Section 14. Repealing Clause. – All laws, rules, orders, or issuances inconsistent with this Act are hereby repealed or modified accordingly.

Section 15. Effectivity. – This Act shall take effect upon its publication in the Official Gazette or in two (2) newspapers of general circulation.

Approved,