



Republic of the Philippines
House of Representatives
Quezon City, Metro Manila

Twentieth Congress
First Regular Session

HOUSE BILL NO. **4248**



Introduced by Representatives Ferdinand Martin G. Romualdez, Yedda Marie K. Romualdez, Andrew Julian K. Romualdez and Jude A. Acidre

AN ACT
PROVIDING EDUCATION PATHWAYS FOR BASIC EDUCATION STUDENTS, AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR

EXPLANATORY NOTE

According to data from the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA), the country consistently reports high youth unemployment and underemployment rates. This is further compounded by limited access to quality education, especially in rural and marginalized communities. The 2022 World Bank report revealed that more than 90% of Filipino children aged 10 cannot read and understand age-appropriate texts—an indication of a learning crisis that demands urgent reform.

The Philippine education system continues to face structural and systemic challenges that hinder inclusive and sustainable national development. Despite the implementation of the K–12 Basic Education Program in 2013, many learners still face barriers to completing their education and transitioning into meaningful employment, higher education, or lifelong learning opportunities.

The establishment of the Senior High School (SHS) program was a significant step toward aligning the Philippine education system with international standards, aiming to bridge the gap between high school and tertiary education. According to the Department of Education (DepEd), the overarching goal of the SHS curriculum is to produce graduates who are “holistically

developed; equipped with 21st-century skills; and prepared for the future, be it in the pursuit of higher education or acquisition of middle-level skills, or geared toward employment or entrepreneurship.”¹

Recent public opinion data underscores growing dissatisfaction with the SHS program. According to a Pulse Asia survey conducted from March 23 to 29, 2025, commissioned by Senator Sherwin Gatchalian, 40% of respondents expressed dissatisfaction with the SHS program, while only 33% reported satisfaction. These figures reflect a declining level of public confidence in the program’s effectiveness and raise important questions about its ability to deliver on its promised outcomes such as improved employability, better college preparedness, and practical life skills for learners.² Moreover, a Philippine Institute for Development Studies (PIDS) study in 2020 said that "only one (1) in five (5) SHS graduates enter the labor force upon graduation." PIDS also revealed that the other half of those who enter the labor force after Grade 12 "choose to pursue higher education as they realize that employers prefer applicants with higher education credentials."

With this, there have been efforts to provide students with more pathways or different options among a series of educational programs or credentials that prepare students to transition to different levels of education and to careers.³ This bill seeks to establish multiple education pathways tailored to the diverse abilities, talents, and skills of students while fostering their potential to excel by prioritizing and cultivating their individual strengths. Further, this bill aims to provide ensure opportunities for Filipinos to attain their maximum potential and enhance their employability by establishing inclusive education pathways that empower and equip the learners with the competencies that are necessary for college or employment.

Through this bill, young learners are given the option to either graduate from basic education soonest after four (4) years of high school, or prepare themselves for another two (2) years of pre-university education after high school if they choose to continue to higher education.

¹ Dep’t of Education, DepEd Order No. 21, s. 2019, Policy Guidelines on the K to 12 Basic Education Program (22 Aug. 2019), https://www.deped.gov.ph/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/DO_s2019_21.pdf (last accessed Aug. 4, 2025).

² Senate Reviews Stronger Senior High Program, Philstar (May 9, 2025), <https://www.philstar.com/headlines/2025/05/09/2441700/senate-reviews-stronger-senior-high-program> (last accessed Aug. 4, 2025).

³ Christine G. Mokher & Amihan April C. Mella-Alcazar, Improving Education Pathways: Collaboration Supporting Transitions from K-12 to Postsecondary Education in the Philippines, 106 Int’l J. Educ. Dev. 2024.

This measure was also filed during the 19th Congress and was primarily referred to the Committee on Basic Education and Culture, where it was approved on third and final reading by the House of Representatives.

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



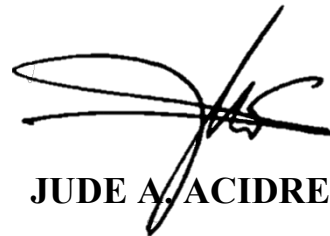
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Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the Philippines in Congress assembled:

**CHAPTER 1
GENERAL PROVISIONS**

SECTION 1. *Short Title.* – This Act shall be known as the “Education Pathways Act”.

SEC. 2. *Declaration of Policy.* – It is the policy of the State to 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. The State shall further

establish, maintain, and support a complete, adequate, and integrated system of education relevant to the needs of the people and society.

To this end, the State shall ensure opportunities for Filipinos, regardless of age, background, ethnicity, disability, and association, to attain their maximum potential and enhance their employability by establishing inclusive education pathways that empower and equip the learners with the competencies that are necessary for college or employment.

SEC. 3. *Education Pathways for Completers of Junior High School.* – Upon completing Junior High School, the students shall choose between two education pathways: the University Preparatory Program under the Department of Education (DepEd) or the Technical-Vocational Program under the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA).

SEC. 4. *Career Guidance and Assessments of Students.* – Career guidance and counseling services, including aptitude and interest assessments to assist in selecting appropriate paths, as provided in Republic Act No. 11206, or the “Secondary School Career Guidance and Counseling Act”, shall be indispensable and crucial in aiding the students to make informed decisions about their preferred educational pathway.

The DepEd shall administer various relevant assessments, including Early Language, Literacy and Numeracy Assessment and National Achievement Tests, to all elementary and secondary students across all levels. These assessments aim to evaluate their competencies and strengths. The results must be communicated to the students and their parents or guardians to provide them with ample time to consider their educational and career paths. These results shall also serve as a

guide to the DepEd and teachers in adjusting and refining their teaching approaches to enhance effectiveness in student learning.

The DepEd, TESDA, Commission on Higher Education (CHED), Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE), Department of Trade and Industry (DTI), Department of Information and Communications Technology (DICT), Philippine Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Employers Confederation of the Philippines, National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA), and other concerned agencies shall develop a system or a portal where students can access data and information concerning higher and technical education, current career and industry trends and demands, and other tools that will guide them in their educational and career choices.

SEC. 5. *University Preparatory Pathway.* – The DepEd shall develop and implement a comprehensive curriculum for Grades 11 and 12 that prepares students for admission to colleges and universities.

This curriculum shall encompass fundamental subjects to improve and guarantee that students acquire functional literacy and practical skills, and elective courses to allow students to explore their interests and meet college and university admission requirements of their chosen degree.

The DepEd shall include the University Preparatory Pathway in its education roadmap and collaborate with the CHED, colleges, and universities to guarantee alignment between the curriculum and college admission standards. Colleges and universities must ensure that students can easily obtain information about their program of study or curriculum guide to adequately prepare for their college studies.

SEC. 6. *Technical-Vocational Education Pathway.* – TESDA and the industry boards, partners, experts, and practitioners, including micro, small and medium enterprises, shall develop a variety of technical-vocational programs based on an industry-driven and industry-approved standards designed to equip students with practical skills and competencies that are at par with industry requirements. These programs must lead to a diploma or a higher national certificate level. The standards of these programs must further ensure that students acquire functional literacy skills to guarantee their employability upon completion of their chosen program and undergoing the necessary assessment for certification.

To effectively implement the programs, TESDA and its accredited Technical Vocational Institutions must have a sufficient number of partner enterprises to ensure that the standards and training for these programs are aligned with current industry needs and requirements. This collaboration shall include the conduct of a review and evaluation of the standards every three (3) years to maintain its relevance and responsiveness to the prevailing trends in the industry. For TESDA to undertake the prompt issuance of training regulations or competency standards, whichever is applicable, for new and emerging skill sets, they shall likewise strengthen existing industry boards and establish within two (2) years from the effectivity of this Act industry boards for sectors without one. In the development and issuance of training regulations or competency standards, TESDA and the industry boards shall focus on higher-skill level and diploma programs.

TESDA shall give preference to enterprise-based training programs for National Certification levels III and IV, Philippine Qualifications Framework level 5, and new and emerging skills for technical-vocational learners to enhance

their skills and knowledge according to industry needs to encourage industry stakeholders to provide enterprise-based training, apprenticeship opportunities, and skills development.

The assessments and certifications of students under public technical-vocational institutions and TESDA-funded programs shall be free of charge. TESDA shall implement a system that provides subsidies to students in private education, industry, or enterprise for their assessments and certifications by their economic standing. No student who failed at least three (3) times may avail of the free or subsidized assessment and certification.

SEC. 7. *Honors Examination.* – The DepEd, in consultation with the CHED, shall develop and administer an advanced placement exam, to be taken voluntarily by Grade 10 students in the University Preparatory Pathway, in order to assess their aptitude and readiness to advance to a college degree.

This advanced placement exam shall give students a grade which shall correspond to their level of proficiency and determine their eligibility to enroll to their chosen degree in a college or university.

Students who successfully pass the advanced placement exam shall be considered graduates of senior high school without the need to finish Grades 11 and 12, and shall be allowed to enroll in their chosen degree the following school year, subject to other requirements that colleges or universities may impose.

SEC. 8. *Availment of the Ladderized Education Program under Republic Act No. 10647.* – Upon completion of the full technical-vocational program, the student may enroll in colleges or universities and avail of the ladderized education

program for educational advancement. The CHED and TESDA shall strengthen existing policies and implementation of programs for the accreditation and recognition of prior learning of students.

SEC. 9. *Scholarship Programs.* – To ensure that the two educational pathways are accessible to a broad range of students, the DepEd and TESDA shall maintain an educational support program including scholarships for their respective students that properly and sufficiently addresses the accessibility and availability of the pathways to the marginalized communities and learners.

The DepEd and TESDA shall continue to make available to their respective students the scholarship programs currently implemented in their agencies.

Scholarships in the Technical-Vocational Education Pathway shall be made available to learners with disabilities, indigenous learners, and those coming from marginalized communities.

Prioritization shall also be given to students enrolled in programs with higher skill levels or urgently needed by the industries.

SEC. 10. *Program Evaluation.* – The DepEd and TESDA shall regularly assess and evaluate the effectiveness and quality of their respective education pathways. The findings of these assessments and evaluations shall be utilized to implement essential enhancements and modifications to ensure that the curriculum remains relevant to society.

SEC. 11. *Support from Other Government Departments and Agencies.* – The CHED, DOLE, DTI, DICT, Department of Agriculture, Department of Science

and Technology, NEDA, Philippine Qualifications Framework National Coordinating Council, Department of Budget and Management, and other related agencies are hereby mandated to extend the necessary support and resources towards the effective implementation of this Act.

SEC. 12. *Transition Provisions.* – The DepEd and TESDA shall develop and refine their respective curriculum and standards to ensure that such are highly relevant and aligned with the current and future needs of society and industry, including emerging technologies, skills, and workforce demands.

To ensure the effectiveness of the newly developed curriculum and standards, an initial implementation phase for three (3) years shall be conducted in a selected number of schools from different regions, socioeconomic conditions, and both urban and rural settings to be determined by the agencies. The DepEd and TESDA shall conduct comprehensive assessments during this pilot phase to evaluate the effectiveness of the curriculum and standards in preparing the students for university and college or the workforce, and ensuring that it meets the intended goals. The assessment shall be accessible to the public and may undergo independent or third-party review. The DepEd and TESDA shall refine and enhance their respective curriculum and standards after considering the feedback from various sectors and roll out the final curriculum and standards within one (1) year from the assessment.

Upon attaining the qualification standards, the teachers and instructors under the current Technical-Vocational Track of the Senior High School of the DepEd shall be given preference in hiring of instructors and teachers by the TESDA for the implementation of this Act.

SEC. 13. *Appropriations.* – The amount necessary for the implementation of this Act shall be included in the respective budgets of DepEd and TESDA in the annual General Appropriations Act.

SEC. 14. *Joint Congressional Oversight Committee.* – There is hereby created a Joint Congressional Oversight Committee (JCOC) to monitor and oversee the implementation of the provisions of this Act. The JCOC shall be composed of five (5) members each from the Senate and from the House of Representatives, respectively, including a member of the minority from each chamber, to be chaired jointly by the chairpersons of the Committees on Basic Education of both the Senate and the House of Representatives. The four (4) other members from each chamber shall be designated, respectively, by the President of the Senate and the Speaker of the House of Representatives.

SEC. 15. *Implementing Rules and Regulations (IRR).* – Within ninety (90) days from the approval of this Act, the DepEd, TESDA, and CHED shall, in consultation with other concerned stakeholders, formulate and issue the rules and regulations implementing the provisions of this Act.

SEC. 16. *Separability Clause.* – If any part or provision of this Act is held invalid or unconstitutional, other provisions not affected thereby shall remain in force and effect.

SEC. 17. *Repealing Clause.* – Section 4 of Republic Act No. 10533, or the “Enhanced Basic Education Act of 2013”, is hereby amended to remove the compulsory requirement for Senior High School in basic education.

All other laws, orders, and rules and regulations contrary to, or inconsistent with the provisions of this Act are hereby repealed or amended accordingly.

SEC. 18. *Effectivity.* – Notwithstanding the non-issuance of the IRR, this Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its publication in the Official Gazette or in a newspaper of general circulation.

Approved,