



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

Twentieth Congress
First Regular Session



HOUSE BILL NO. **4270**

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

AN ACT
ESTABLISHING A VOUCHER SYSTEM FOR POOR AND
ACADEMICALLY QUALIFIED STUDENTS OF PRIVATE HIGHER
EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS AND PRIVATE TECHNICAL-
VOCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS, AMENDING FOR THE PURPOSE
REPUBLIC ACT NO. 10931, OTHERWISE KNOWN AS THE
“UNIVERSAL ACCESS TO QUALITY TERTIARY EDUCATION ACT”

EXPLANATORY NOTE

Section 1, Article XIV of the 1987 Philippine Constitution recognizes education as a fundamental right and mandates 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. Section 2(3) under the same Article mandates the establishment and maintenance of a system of scholarship grants, student loan programs, subsidies, and other incentives which shall be available to deserving students in both public and private schools, especially to the underprivileged. In furtherance of these constitutional mandates, this bill seeks to provide additional financial assistance for students, particularly those enrolled or who wish to enroll in private higher educational institutions (HEIs) and private technical-vocational institutions (TVIs).

In 2017, Republic Act No. 10931, otherwise known as the “*Universal Access to Quality Tertiary Education Act*,” was enacted to provide free tuition and other school fees in state universities and colleges (SUC) and local universities and colleges (LUC), state-run technical-vocation institutions. It also

established a tertiary education subsidy (TES) to cover the costs of learning materials, transportation, board and lodging, and other education-related expenses for those enrolled in both public and private HEIs and TVIs. But despite its noble intent, the law has inadvertently marginalized poor students enrolled in private HEIs and TVIs.

As of June 2025, there are 2,334 HEIs in the country – 1,714 (71%) of which are owned privately.¹ Data from the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) consistently show that over 50% of enrolled tertiary-level students in the Philippines study in private HEIs. Latest data available show that private school enrollment is around 2.47 million in 2022-2023, from 2.07 million.² However, many of these students are from low-income families, and they struggle to afford rising tuition and other educational costs. These families opted to enroll in private HEIs due to: (1) limited slots and competitive admissions in public schools which exclude many financially disadvantaged students who lack access to quality basic education and college entrance test preparation; (2) geographic limitations that force students in remote municipalities to enroll in nearby private HEIs, as public HEIs are located far from their communities; and, (3) mismatch in program offerings since many public HEIs do not offer specialized or in-demand programs available in private institutions. These trends point to a harsh reality: many low-income students are forced to attend private colleges not by choice, but by circumstance.

Given these realities, there is an urgent need to amend RA 10931. Thus, this bill seeks to address this critical gap by expanding the coverage of TES and establishing a dedicated voucher system for poor and academically qualified students enrolled in private HEIs and TVIs.

In this bill, the TES will include Filipino students enrolled in private HEIs in cities or municipalities where an SUC or LUC exists but does not offer comparable or equivalent degree programs, and the TES beneficiaries will continue to receive such subsidy until they complete their degree or course. Meanwhile, the proposed voucher system will subsidize the tuition and miscellaneous fees of poor and academically qualified students to allow them to study or transfer to private HEIs or TVIs.

A targeted voucher system would ensure that financial assistance follows the student, especially those who have no viable access to public institutions due to location, capacity, or program availability. Such a system would promote

¹ <https://ched.gov.ph/wp-content/uploads/HEIs-Distribution-AY-2024-25-as-of-26June2025.pdf>

² <https://opinion.inquirer.net/173061/private-schools-cant-do-it-alone-need-govt-help>

equity, efficiency, and student choice, ensuring that the most vulnerable students are not excluded from quality tertiary education.

Principally authored by Baguio Lone District Representative Mark Go, this measure was approved by the House on Third Reading during the 19th Congress.

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



YEDDA MARIE K. ROMUALDEZ



ANDREW JULIAN K. ROMUALDEZ



JUDE A. ACIDRE



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

Section 1. Section 3 of Republic Act No. 10931 or the “Universal Access to Quality Tertiary Education Act” is hereby amended to read as follows:

“Section 3. *Definition of Terms.* - As used in this Act:

XXX

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;

xxx

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

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

xxx

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

Section 2. Section 3 (i) and (j) are amended to be denominated as Section 3 (j) and (k) respectively. Section 3 (k) to (u) are amended to be denominated as Section 3 (n) to (x).

Section 3. Section 7 of Republic Act No. 10931 is hereby amended to read as follows:

“SEC. 7. *TERTIARY EDUCATION SUBSIDY (TES) for Filipino Students.*

- To support the cost of tertiary education or any part or portion thereof, a TES is hereby established IN ALL SUCs, LUCs, PRIVATE HEIs AND TVIs for all Filipino students who [shall] enroll in THE FIRST undergraduate-post-secondary TERTIARY EDUCATION program[s] [of SUCs, LUCs, private HEIs and all TVIs] OF THEIR CHOICE. The TES shall be administered by the UniFAST Board and the amount necessary to fund the TES shall be included in the RESPECTIVE budgets of the CHED and the TESDA: *Provided*, That prioritization shall be given to students in the following order: (a) students who are part of households included in the UPDATED *Listahanan* [2.0] 3, LAUNCHED ON AUGUST 1, 2022 BY THE DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL WELFARE AND DEVELOPMENT, ranked according to the estimated per capita household income; and (b) students not part of the *Listahanan* [2.0] 3, ranked according to estimated per capita household income based on [submitted documentation of] THE proof of income to be determined by the UniFAST Board: *Provided*[,] *further*, That such prioritization shall not apply to Filipino students in cities and municipalities with no existing SUC or LUC campus AND PUBLIC TVI: *PROVIDED FINALLY*, THAT FILIPINO STUDENTS ENROLLED IN UNDERGRADUATE PROGRAMS IN PRIVATE HEIs IN CITIES AND MUNICIPALITIES WHERE AN SUC OR LUC EXISTS, BUT

DOES NOT OFFER COMPARABLE OR EQUIVALENT DEGREE PROGRAMS, SHALL BE ELIGIBLE FOR TES.

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

- (a) Tuition and other school fees in private HEIs, and private [or LGU-operated] TVIs, which shall be equivalent to the tuition and other school fees of the nearest SUC or state-run TVI in their respective areas;
- (b) [An] [a] AllowanceS for books, SCHOOL supplies, transportation TO AND FROM SCHOOL, and [miscellaneous personal expenses including a] reasonable allowance for the documented rental or purchase of a [personal computer or laptop] DESKTOP OR PORTABLE COMPUTER, WHEN APPLICABLE [and other education-related expenses];
- (c) An allowance for room and board costs TO BE incurred by the student, WHEN APPLICABLE;
- (d) xxx
- (e) xxx

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

Section 4. A new Section denominated as Section 7A is hereby inserted after Section 7 of Republic Act No. 10931 to read as follows:

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

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

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

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

Section 5. Within sixty (60) days from the effectivity of this Act, the CHED shall issue the rules and regulations as may be necessary to implement the provisions of this Act.

Section 6. Republic Act No. 10931, otherwise known as the "Universal Access to Quality Tertiary Education Act”, is hereby amended. All laws, presidential decrees, executive orders, rules and regulations, and issuances or

parts thereof which are inconsistent with the provisions of this Act are repealed, amended or modified accordingly.

Section 7. This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its publication in the *Official Gazette* or in a newspaper of general circulation.

Approved,