

Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Quezon City

20th CONGRESS
First Regular Session

HOUSE BILL NO. 4491



Introduced by REP. JUAN CARLOS "ARJO" C. ATAYDE

**AN ACT
EXEMPTING QUALIFIED INDIGENT FILIPINOS FROM PAYMENT OF
PROFESSIONAL EXAMINATION FEES AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES**

EXPLANATORY NOTE

Poverty has always been a barrier to opportunities in order to have a better life for many Filipinos. Over the years, legislators have worked together to give our underprivileged students the opportunity to finish their college education. Such enactments include the RA No. 10648 otherwise known as the *Iskolar ng Bayan Act of 2014*, RA No. 10687 otherwise known as the *Unified Student Financial Assistance System for Tertiary Education (UNIFAST Law)*, and RA No. 10931 otherwise known as the *Universal Access to Quality Tertiary Education Act*.

With access to college education already in place, students who want to upgrade their standard of living envision themselves to become professionals. In fact, healthcare related courses such as nursing have been a popular choice among students because of the demand for nurses abroad with a highly competitive salary. Given that State support from the previously mentioned laws shall already cease upon graduation from college, there exists a gap between education and employment and that is the costly fees related to taking the professional examinations.

Documentary requirements, travel expenses for processing and claiming such requirements, and the professional examination fees/charges are also out of pocket expenses of graduates looking to take their professional examination. To minimize the expenses of our underprivileged Filipinos, this measure seeks to exempt qualified indigent Filipino citizens from payment of professional examination fees.

In recognizing the value of our professionals towards state building, the passage of this measure is urgently sought.



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

3 **SECTION 1. Short Title.** - *This Act shall be known as the "Free Professional*
4 *Examinations Act".*

5 **SEC. 2. Declaration of Policy.** - It is the declared policy of the State to promote
6 full employment and to provide equal opportunities for employment for all. Corollary
7 to this, the State shall promote a just and dynamic social order that will free the people
8 from poverty through policies and programs that provide adequate social services and
9 improve the quality of life for all. In this regard, efforts should be exerted to provide
10 the qualified indigent Filipinos access to government certifications which will
11 recognize their potential as professionals and partners to nation-building.

12 **Sec. 3. Definition of Terms.** - As provided for in this Act;

13 a. "Professional Examination" shall refer to the licensure examinations
14 conducted by the Professional Regulations Commission leading to the issuance of a
15 professional license, and the examinations conducted by the Civil Service Commission
16 leading to eligibility for employment to the government as a civil service professional
17 or sub-professionals.

18 b. "Qualified Indigent" refers to a person who has no visible means of income
19 or support, or whose income is insufficient for the subsistence or basic needs of his

1 family, as may be determined by the Department of Social Welfare and Development
2 (DSWD).

3 **SEC. 4. *Requirements for Availment.*** - For purposes of availing the benefits of
4 this Act, an examinee shall secure a certification from the DSWD that said examinee
5 is a qualified indigent. Such certification shall be presented to the Professional
6 Regulations Commission (PRC), or the Civil Service Commission (CSC), as the case
7 may be, in lieu of the payment of examination fees. No other fee shall be charged
8 against the qualified indigent for purposes of the professional examination.

9 **SEC. 5. *Limitations on Availment.*** - Benefits of this Act may be availed of only
10 by a qualified indigent once.

11 **SEC. 6. *Information, Education and Communication (IEC) Campaign.*** - The
12 DSWD, PRC, and CSC, and the Commission on Higher Education (CHED), in
13 cooperation with the Philippine Information Agency (PIA), is hereby mandated to
14 conduct an annual IEC campaign in order to inform the people of the procedures and
15 guidelines in availing the benefits of this Act.

16 **SEC. 7. *Reportorial Requirement.*** - For purposes of determining the impact of
17 the provisions of this Act, the DSWD, PRC, CSC and CHED shall submit an annual
18 report to the Senate Committee on Civil Service, Government Reorganization and
19 Professional Regulation and House Committee on Civil Service and Professional
20 Regulation. The said report shall indicate the detail, among others, geographic
21 distribution, demographic characteristics and socioeconomic profile of the
22 beneficiaries of this Act.

23 **SEC. 8. *Non-Duplication of Benefits.*** - Examinees who are already covered
24 with similar benefits under other laws and programs of the government shall not be
25 entitled to the benefits of this Act.

26 **SEC. 9. *Harmonization with the CHED - Unified Student Financial Assistance***
27 ***System for Tertiary Education (UniFAST)*** - The implementation of this Act shall be
28 harmonized with the the implementation of the Tertiary Education Subsidy under
29 Section 7 of Republic Act 10931, otherwise known as, "Universal Access to Quality
30 Tertiary Education Ad."

31 **SEC. 10. *Implementing Rules and Regulations.*** - Within ninety (90) days from
32 the date of effectivity of this Act, the DSWD, PRC, CSC and CHED shall formulate the
33 Implementing Rules and Regulations for the proper and effective implementation of
34 the provisions of this Act.

1 **SEC. 11. Appropriations.** - An amount necessary for the implementation of this
2 Act shall be charged against the respective budgetary allocations of the concerned
3 government agencies. Thereafter, an amount necessary for the proper implementation
4 of this Act shall be included in the annual General Appropriations Act.

5
6 **SEC. 12. Separability Clause.** - If any provision of this Act is declared invalid
7 or unconstitutional, other provisions hereof which are not affected thereby shall
8 remain in full force and effect.

9 **SEC. 13. Repealing Clause.** - All laws, orders, decrees, rules and regulations,
10 and other parts thereof inconsistent with the provisions of this Act are hereby
11 repealed, amended or modified accordingly.

12 **SEC. 14. Effectivity.** - This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its
13 publication either in the Official Gazette or in two (2) newspapers of general
14 circulation in the Philippines.

15 Approved,