



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

Twentieth Congress
First Regular Session

HOUSE BILL NO. **5563**



Introduced by Representative Benjamin C. Agarao, Jr.

EXPLANATORY NOTE

Republic Act No. 10931, or the *Universal Access to Quality Tertiary Education Act*, has opened doors for many Filipinos through Free Higher Education (FHE) and the Tertiary Education Subsidy (TES). Eight years since its passage, however, gaps remain in ensuring that the law truly benefits those most in need.

Findings from the Second Congressional Commission on Education (*EDCOM 2*) show that TES beneficiaries from the poorest households have drastically fallen—from 74.24% in AY 2018–2019 to only 30.74% in AY 2022–2023. To address this, the bill strengthens the needs-based selection of TES grantees.

The reduction of TES support from ₱30,000 to ₱10,000 per semester has also burdened students and limited their choices of programs. This measure restores the TES to at least ₱30,000 per semester, with additional support for meals and transportation, to keep pace with rising costs.

Finally, the bill addresses long-standing implementation issues by mandating clearer guidelines, stronger accountability, and better grievance mechanisms to ensure efficient delivery of benefits.

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


HON. BENJAMIN C. AGARAO, JR.
4th District, Laguna



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AN ACT
ENHANCING THE UNIVERSAL ACCESS TO QUALITY TERTIARY EDUCATION
ACT, AMENDING FOR THIS PURPOSE REPUBLIC ACT NO. 10931

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

Section 1. Section 7 of Republic Act No. 10931 or the "Universal Access to Quality Tertiary Education Act" is hereby amended to read as follows:

"SECTION 7. TES for Filipino Students. — To support the cost of tertiary education or any part or portion thereof, a TES is hereby established for all Filipino students who shall enroll in undergraduate post-secondary programs of SUCs, LUCs, private HEIs, and all TVIs. The TES shall be administered by the UniFAST Board and the amount necessary to fund the TES shall be included in the budgets of the CHED and TESDA: *Provided*, That prioritization shall be given to students in the following order: (a) students who are part of households included in the UPDATED OR MOST RECENT Listahanan, ranked according to the estimated per capita household income; and (b) students not part of the Listahanan, ranked according to estimate per capita household income based on submitted documentation of proof of income to be determined by the UniFAST Board; and (c) SPECIAL PRIORITIZATION SHALL LIKEWISE BE ACCORDED TO INDIGENOUS PEOPLES, PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES (PWDs), SOLO PARENTS, VICTIMS OF DISASTERS AND ARMED CONFLICT, AND STUDENTS FROM GEOGRAPHICALLY ISOLATED AND DISADVANTAGED AREAS.

The TERTIARY EDUCATION SUBSIDY SHALL BE NO LESS THAN THIRTY THOUSAND PESOS (P30,000.00) PER SEMESTER. THE AMOUNT SHALL BE DETERMINED BY THE UNIFAST BOARD. THE UNIFAST BOARD SHALL PERIODICALLY REVIEW THE SUBSIDY AMOUNT EVERY TWO (2) YEARS AND ADJUST IT IN ACCORDANCE WITH INFLATION

RATES AND OTHER RELEVANT ECONOMIC INDICATORS.

TO SUPPORT THE COST OF TERTIARY EDUCATION OR ANY PART OR PORTION THEREOF, the TES, among others, 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) Allowance for MEALS, books, SCHOOL supplies, transportation TO AND FROM SCHOOL, and a reasonable allowance for the documented rental or purchase of a DESKTOP or PORTABLE COMPUTER and other education related expenses;
- (c) Allowance for costs related to required internships, on-the-job training, or practicums, including transportation, board and lodging, safety equipment, or other essential requirements;
- (d) Xxx
- (e) xxx
- (f) An allowance for room and board costs incurred by the student;
- (g) Subsidy for necessary thesis, capstone project, or research expenses, including printing, data collection, fieldwork, and other approved academic requirements;

ALL TES BENEFICIARIES SHALL NOT RECEIVE LESS THAN THE INITIAL AMOUNT OF SUBSIDY OR BENEFIT GRANTED TO THEM UNTIL THE COMPLETION OF THEIR RESPECTIVE UNDERGRADUATE, POST-SECONDARY TERTIARY EDUCATION OR TECHNICAL-VOCATIONAL PROGRAMS, PROVIDED THAT THE TES BENEFICIARIES SHALL COMPLY WITH THE RETENTION AND RESIDENCY REQUIREMENTS IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE RULES AND REGULATIONS OF THE HEIS AND TVIS.

Section 2. A new section 9 shall be inserted as follows, with the provisions below renumbered accordingly:

"SECTION 9. STRENGTHENING THE VALIDATION AND VERIFICATION CAPACITY OF CHED REGIONAL OFFICES TO IMPLEMENT THE UAQTE AND STUFAPS PROGRAMS. — EACH CHEDRO SHALL ESTABLISH A VALIDATION AND VERIFICATION UNIT WITH SUFFICIENT PERSONNEL TO REVIEW, VALIDATE, AND VERIFY THE DOCUMENTARY SUBMISSIONS FROM HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS AND/OR STUDENTS TO ENSURE ITS ADHERENCE TO EXISTING LAWS, RULES, AND REGULATIONS OF THE RELEVANT STUDENT FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS (STUFAPS) AND THE UNIVERSAL ACCESS

TO QUALITY TERTIARY EDUCATION PROGRAMS ADMINISTERED BY THE COMMISSION ON HIGHER EDUCATION."

Section 3. A new section 10 shall be inserted as follows, with the provisions below renumbered accordingly:

"SECTION 10. UAQTE GRIEVANCE MECHANISM. — A GRIEVANCE COMMITTEE SHALL BE ESTABLISHED WITHIN BOTH THE COMMISSION ON HIGHER EDUCATION AND THE TECHNICAL EDUCATION AND SKILLS DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

THE GRIEVANCE COMMITTEE ESTABLISHED IN THE COMMISSION ON HIGHER EDUCATION SHALL INVESTIGATE AND RESOLVE DISPUTES OR COMPLAINTS BY STUDENTS AND HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS CONCERNING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THIS ACT, WITH REPRESENTATION FROM UNIFAST.

THE GRIEVANCE COMMITTEE IN THE TECHNICAL EDUCATION AND SKILLS DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY SHALL LIKEWISE INVESTIGATE AND RESOLVE DISPUTES OR COMPLAINTS BY STUDENTS AND TECHNICAL-VOCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS CONCERNING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THIS ACT, WITH REPRESENTATION FROM UNIFAST.

THE COMMISSION ON HIGHER EDUCATION AND THE TECHNICAL EDUCATION AND SKILLS DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY SHALL ENSURE THAT INFORMATION ABOUT THE GRIEVANCE COMMITTEES AND ITS PROCESSES ARE ACCESSIBLE."

Section 4. Section 15 of Republic Act No. 10931 or the "Enhanced Universal Access to Quality Tertiary Education Act" is hereby amended to read as follows:

"Section 15. Appropriations. — The amounts necessary to carry out the provisions of this Act, specifically Sections 4, 5, 7, 8, AND 9 shall be included in the annual General Appropriations Act (GAA) and shall be appropriated under SUCs, CHED and TESDA in accordance with the provisions of this Act: Provided, That an amount equivalent to not more than three percent (3%) of the TES and student loan program for tertiary education provided under this Act may be used as administrative cost under the UniFAST. PROVIDED, FURTHER, THAT IN ADDITION TO THE ANNUAL APPROPRIATIONS, SUCH SUMS AS MAY BE NECESSARY TO PAY FOR ANY UNPAID OBLIGATIONS OR PRIOR YEAR DEFICIENCIES INCURRED SHALL ALSO BE APPROPRIATED IN THE GENERAL APPROPRIATIONS ACT, TO ENSURE THE FULL IMPLEMENTATION AND SUSTAINABILITY OF THE BENEFITS GUARANTEED UNDER THIS ACT."

Section 5. Separability Clause. — If any provision of this Act is declared invalid or unconstitutional, the other provisions not affected thereby shall continue to be in full force and effect.

Section 6. Repealing Clause. — All laws, decrees, executive orders or rules and regulations contrary to or inconsistent with the provisions of this Act are hereby repealed or modified accordingly.

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

Approved.