

Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Quezon City

TWENTIETH CONGRESS
First Regular Session

HOUSE BILL NO. 5650



Introduced by: Kababaihan Kabalikatan para sa Kapakanan at Kaunlaran ng Bayan (4K) Party-list
Representative Iris Marie D. Montes

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

EXPLANATORY NOTE

Article II, Section 17 of the 1987 Philippine Constitution provides that:

"The State shall give priority to education, science and technology, arts, culture, and sports to foster patriotism and nationalism, accelerate social progress, and promote total human liberation and development."

Pursuant to this fundamental mandate, Republic Act No. 10931, otherwise known as the "Universal Access to Quality Tertiary Education Act" was passed into law in 2017. It aims to make higher education more accessible by implementing Free Higher Education (FHE) in State and Local Universities and Colleges, while also creating the Tertiary Education Subsidy (TES) to help cover tuition and living expenses.

Albeit the TES program of the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) and the Unified Student Financial Assistance System for Tertiary Education (UniFAST) has positive impacts on improving access to higher education for underprivileged Filipino students, significant gaps hinder its effectiveness.¹

Recent findings from the Second Congressional Commission on Education (EDCOM 2) reveals that not all TES beneficiaries come from impoverished households.² The share of TES grantees from the poorest households decreased from 74.24% in Audit Year (AY) 2018-2019 to 30.74% in AY 2022-2023. In light of this, the EDCOM 2 recommended that the selection of TES beneficiaries should be based on economic need.

The EDCOM 2 also found that the reduction of the TES grant from P30,000 to P10,000 per semester reduces the choices of undergraduate programs that students can enrol in and places additional financial burden on students and their families.

¹ Addressing Gaps in Tertiary Education Subsidy Needed For Equitable And Quality Higher Education, Philippine Institute for Development Studies, January 11, 2025

² Fixing the Foundations: A Matter of National Survival, EDCOM II Year Two Report

In this light, this measure seeks to ensure that the most impoverished students are prioritized in benefitting from the TES program. It also guarantees that students will receive at least P30,000 per semester to provide sufficient support for their pursuit of higher education.

Moreover, in light of rising costs, this bill includes an allowance for meals and transportation to and from school; establishes a separate validation and verification unit, with guaranteed funding, within CHED Regional Offices to efficiently process documents; and institutionalizes accessible grievance committees on UAQTE within both CHED and TESDA.

This proposal enhances the UAQTE law by introducing reforms that make higher education more accessible to all, especially the most impoverished, and by institutionalizing mechanisms to address issues in its implementation.

The bill serves as a counterpart measure to Senate Bill No. 1245 by Senator Risa Hontiveros.

Hence, approval of this bill is earnestly sought.


IRIS MARIE D. MONTES
Kababaihan Kabalikatan para sa Kapakanan
at Kaunlaran ng Bayan (4K) Party-list

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Be it enacted by the Senate and the 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 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 OR MOST RECENT Listahanan, ranked according to the estimated per capita household income; and (b) students not part of the Listahanan, ranked according to estimated per capita household income based on submitted documentation of 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.]

"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, [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[a]llowance for MEALS, 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 and other education-related expenses;

(c) An allowance for room and board costs incurred by the student;

(d) XXX.

(e) XXX.

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, POSTSECONDARY 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."

SEC. 2. A new section 9 shall be inserted as follows, with the provisions below it 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."

SEC. 3. A new section 10 shall be inserted as follows, with the provisions below it 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 BE RESPONSIBLE FOR INVESTIGATING AND RESOLVING DISPUTES OR COMPLAINTS BY STUDENTS AND HIGHER EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS IN RELATION TO THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THIS LAW. THE GRIEVANCE COMMITTEE SHALL INCLUDE REPRESENTATION FROM UNIFAST. THE GRIEVANCE COMMITTEE ESTABLISHED IN THE TECHNICAL EDUCATION AND SKILLS DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY SHALL BE RESPONSIBLE FOR INVESTIGATING AND RESOLVING DISPUTES OR COMPLAINTS BY STUDENTS AND TECHNICAL VOCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS IN RELATION TO THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THIS LAW. THE GRIEVANCE COMMITTEE SHALL INCLUDE

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."

SEC. 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 Section 4, 5, 7 [and] 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."

SEC. 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.

SEC. 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.

SEC. 7. *Effectivity.* - This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its publication in the Official Gazette or 25 in any newspaper of the general circulation.

Approved,