



Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Quezon City
TWENTIETH CONGRESS
First Regular Session



House Bill No. 5749

Introduced by CIBAC Party-List Representative
EDUARDO "BRO. EDDIE" C. VILLANUEVA

EXPLANATORY NOTE

The proposed "Abogado Para sa Bayan Act" seeks to establish a Legal Scholarship and Return Service Program (LSRS) to provide financial support for deserving students pursuing legal education while addressing the need for legal services in government offices. This initiative aligns with the constitutional mandate to ensure free access to courts and adequate legal assistance, especially for the underprivileged.

The LSRS Program offers benefits such as free tuition, allowances for books, review fees, and licensure fees for students pursuing a Juris Doctor or Bachelor of Laws degree in state universities and colleges (SUCs) or partner private higher education institutions (HEIs) in regions without SUC law programs. To qualify, students must be Filipino citizens, have completed an undergraduate degree, and pass entrance exams for legal education programs. The conditions for maintaining the scholarship include signing an agreement with the Legal Education Board (LEB), carrying a full course load, and completing the degree within the prescribed timeframe. Scholars must also take the bar exam within one year of graduation and commit to return service.

Disqualifications include failing to meet academic requirements or gross misconduct, which would result in repaying the full cost of the scholarship. The Act mandates a two-year return service in various government agencies within five years of passing the bar, with provisions for those unable to secure government positions to either repay the scholarship or comply with an alternative program formulated by the LEB.

The LEB will determine the number and geographic allocation of scholars based on the shortage of legal practitioners in the public sector, reviewed every five years. The Act ensures harmonization with the Clinical Legal Education Program, enhancing access to justice for marginalized sectors and preparing law students for practice. Sanctions are imposed on lawyers who fail to fulfill the mandatory return

service, requiring them to pay twice the scholarship amount, with exemptions for cases of force majeure.

This Act aims to support aspiring lawyers financially while ensuring that legal assistance reaches those most in need, promoting social responsibility among law graduates. The swift passage of this bill is crucial to uphold the right to legal aid and enhance the public sector's legal services.


EDUARDO "BRO. EDDIE" C. VILLANUEVA



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HOUSE BILL NO. 5749

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AN ACT
ESTABLISHING A LEGAL SCHOLARSHIP AND RETURN SERVICE PROGRAM
FOR DESERVING STUDENTS, AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR

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

1 **SECTION 1. Short Title.** - This Act shall be known as the "*Abogado Para sa*
2 *Bayan Act.*"

3
4 **SEC. 2. Declaration of Policy** - It is hereby declared the policy of the State to
5 uphold the right to free access to the courts and quasi-judicial bodies and ensure that
6 adequate legal assistance shall not be denied to any person by reason of poverty.
7 Towards this end, and in cognizance of the constitutional directive to provide for
8 preventive measures and legal aid services to the underprivileged whose human rights
9 have been violated or need protection, the State shall establish a legal scholarship
10 and return service program to assist deserving students pursue legal education who
11 shall eventually render legal services in government offices.

12
13 **SEC. 3. Legal Scholarship and Return Service Program.** - There shall be
14 established a Legal Scholarship and Return Service (LSRS) Program for deserving
15 students who intend to pursue a Juris Doctor or Bachelor of Laws degree in state
16 universities and colleges (SUCs) or in partner private higher education institutions
17 (HEIs) in regions where there are no SUC offering Juris Doctor or Bachelor of Laws
18 degree. The LSRS Program shall provide the following benefits to qualified legal
19 education students:

- 20
21 (a) Free tuition and other school fees, including but not limited to: student
22 registration fees, library fees, and publication fees;
23 (b) Allowance for prescribed books and supplies;
24 (c) Allowance for review fees for government-mandated bar exams;
25 (a) and
26 (d) Allowance for licensure fees.

1 **SEC. 4. Qualifications and Requirements.** - In order to qualify for the grant of
2 scholarship under the LSRS Program, a prospective or current legal education student
3 must satisfy the following requirements:
4

- 5 (a) Must be a Filipino Citizen residing in the Philippines;
- 6 (b) Must not have completed a Bachelor of Laws or Juris Doctor degree from any
7 HEI offering legal education;
- 8 (c) Must be a graduating student or a graduate of an undergraduate degree
9 program; and
- 10 (d) Must have passed the entrance examination and complied with other
11 requirements for admission into the Juris Doctor or Bachelor of Laws degree
12 program offered by the SUC or private HEI where the student intends to enroll.
13

14 **SEC. 5. Conditions for the Grant of Legal Scholarship.** – Qualified students
15 accepted into the LSRS Program shall be subject to the following conditions:
16

- 17 (a) Must sign an agreement stating the terms and conditions of the scholarship
18 which shall be prescribed by the Legal Education Board (LEB);
- 19 (b) Must carry full load of subjects prescribed per semester by the SUC or private
20 HEI concerned, and shall not, under any circumstance, drop a course which
21 would result in underloading;
- 22 (c) Must finish the Juris Doctor or Bachelor of Laws degree program within the
23 prescribed time frame of the SUC or private HEI where the scholar is enrolled
24 in, subject to the retention policies of the SUC or private HEI concerned:
25 Provided, That a scholar who is already enrolled, may be allowed, for valid and
26 justifiable reasons, to file a leave of absence;
- 27 (d) Must take the bar examination within a maximum period of one (1) year after
28 completion of the Juris Doctor or Bachelor of Laws degree;
- 29 (e) Must render return service as provided under Section 7 of this Act.
30
31

32 **SEC. 6. Disqualifications.** - The scholarship grant shall terminate, and the
33 recipient of legal scholarship shall repay the full cost of scholarship and related
34 benefits received, including all the expenses incurred during the participation in the
35 LSRS program, in case of the following circumstances:
36

- 37 (a) If the scholar fails to meet the academic requirements or to complete the course
38 within the prescribed period without valid cause as may be determined by the
39 SUC or private HEI concerned;
- 40 (b) If the scholar commits gross misconduct in a manner that would bring
41 significant damage to the SUC or private HEI concerned or to the community
42 as a whole.
43

44 **SEC. 7. Mandatory Return Service.** - Within five (5) years from admission to
45 the practice of law, a scholar shall render mandatory return service for two (2) years
46 in government agencies, including, but not limited to: the Public Attorney's Office,
47 National Prosecution Service, Department of Education, Department of Environment
48 and Natural Resources, Department of the Interior and Local Government,
49 Department of Health, Department of Justice, Department of National Defense,
50 Department of Social Welfare and Development, the Courts, or in government

1 agencies and instrumentalities that provide legal services to: i) poor and marginalized
2 individuals and communities, and (ii) public school teachers, public health workers,
3 and military and uniformed personnel involved in cases arising from or in connection
4 with the performance of their duties and functions: Provided, That the mandatory
5 return service shall be separate and distinct from the Clinical Legal Education Program
6 as provided under Rule 138-A of the Rules of Court: Provided, further, That
7 beneficiaries of LSRS Program appointed to plantilla positions shall receive the
8 appropriate salaries, benefits and other emoluments for services rendered under the
9 mandatory return service; Provided, furthermore, That beneficiaries of LSRS Program
10 who, after three (3) years from admission to the practice of law, fails to secure
11 appointment in government shall have the option to pay the full cost of scholarship
12 and related benefits received, including all the expenses incurred during the
13 participation in the LSRS Program; or i) undertake alternative compliance program to
14 be formulated by the LEB pursuant to the provisions of this Act and Republic Act (RA)
15 No. 9999, otherwise known as the Free Legal Assistance Act of 2010: Provided, finally,
16 That in the application of Republic Act No. 9999, the allowable deduction from the
17 gross income shall be the amount that could have been collected from the actual free
18 legal services rendered or up to twenty percent (20%) of the gross income derived
19 from the actual performance of the legal profession, whichever is lower.
20

21 **SEC. 8. Number and Allocation of Students to be Admitted in the Program.**

22 - Prior to the implementation of this Act and every five (5) years thereafter, the LEB
23 shall, in consultation with Philippine Association of Law Schools and participating Hels
24 and upon the assessment of the shortage of legal practitioners in the public sector,
25 determine the appropriate number and geographic allocation of scholars to be
26 admitted in the LSRS Program.
27

28 **SEC. 9. Harmonization with the Clinical Legal Education Program. -**

29 Pursuant to Article VIII, Section 5, subsection 5, of the Constitution, the Legal
30 Education Board shall adopt the policy on the Revised Law Student Practice Rule,
31 ensure that law students participate in the clinical legal education programs in all legal
32 education institutions, define the scope of service to be rendered by law students in
33 the said program, contribute to access to justice of the marginalized sectors, enhance
34 learning opportunities of law students, instill among them social responsibility and
35 awareness, and prepare them for the practice of law.
36

37 **SEC. 10. Sanctions** - Any lawyer who has availed of the benefits under the
38 LSRS Program but fails or refuses to comply with the mandatory return service as
39 provided under this Act shall be required to pay twice the amount of scholarship,
40 including other benefits received by reason of participation in the LSRS Program:
41 Provided, That the penalty imposed herein shall not apply to lawyers who fail to comply
42 with the required return service by reason of force majeure or not due to their fault or
43 negligence
44

45 **SEC. 11. Appropriations.** - The amount necessary for the implementation of
46 this Act shall be included in the annual General Appropriations Act.
47

48 **SEC. 12. Implementing Rules and Regulations.** - Within sixty (60) days from
49 the effectivity of this Act, the LEB shall, in consultation with the Philippine Association
50 of Law Schools, Philippine Association of State Universities and Colleges and

1 Commission on Higher Education, promulgate the rules and regulations to effectively
2 implement the provisions of this Act.

3
4 **SEC. 13. Separability Clause.** - If any portion of this Act is declared invalid or
5 unconstitutional, other provisions hereof shall remain in full force and effect.

6
7 **SEC. 14. Repealing Clause.** - All laws, decrees, orders, rules, and regulations
8 or other issuances or parts thereof inconsistent with the provisions of this Act are
9 hereby repealed or modified accordingly.

10
11 **SEC. 15. Effectivity.** - This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its
12 publication in the Official Gazette or in a newspaper of general circulation.

13
14 *Approved,*