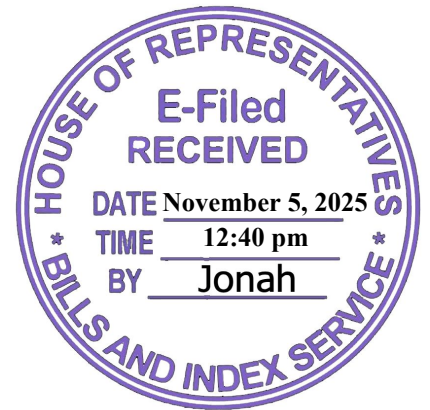




Republic of the Philippines
House of Representatives
Quezon City, Metro Manila

Twentieth Congress
First Regular Session

HOUSE BILL NO. 5763



**Introduced by Representatives Ferdinand Martin G. Romualdez,
Yedda Marie K. Romualdez, Andrew Julian K. Romualdez and Jude A.
Acidre**

AN ACT
INSTITUTIONALIZING THE PRESIDENTIAL MERIT SCHOLARSHIP
PROGRAM FOR DESERVING STUDENTS AND APPROPRIATING
FUNDS THEREFOR

EXPLANATORY NOTE

Section 1, Article XIV of the 1987 Constitution declares that “the State shall 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.” Further, Section 2 (3) of the same Article mandates the State to “establish and maintain 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.”

To support top-performing Senior High School (SHS) graduates from low-income and middle-income families who plan to pursue priority courses in college, the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) launched the Presidential

Merit Scholarship Program during the Higher Education Summit held at the Manila Hotel. This is a merit-based initiative under the government's education agenda and is designed to support academically talented and deserving SHS graduates, particularly those who graduate in the top five of their SHS class and willing to enroll in priority degree programs.

While the program has been established and accepting applicants, it will need over P600 million to fund the 20,000 beneficiaries for fiscal year 2026–2027. To ensure the continuity of the Presidential Merit Scholarship Program for years and even for generations to come, there is a need to institutionalize this noble program through legislation.

This bill aims to give equal opportunity to incoming college students who do not belong to the poorest of the poor and are not within the qualifications of the existing Tertiary Education Subsidy under Republic Act No. 10931 (Universal Access to Quality Tertiary Education Act), but need financial assistance to continue and finish their college education. Specifically, this bill will address the entry of top-performing incoming college students from low-income to middle-income households into job sectors that are very hard to fill, but aligned with national workforce needs. This will also address the government's vision to develop globally competitive Filipino professionals by producing graduates in priority degree programs such as those in health sciences, digital technology, agriculture, fisheries, and other critical fields that are undersubscribed or with very few enrollees.

Likewise, the scholarship program under this proposed law will qualify the scholars to enroll not only in public higher education institutions (HEIs), but also in private HEIs of their choice provided that they pass the admission, merit, and course requirements of the HEI and the CHED. The scholars shall also be entitled

to free tuition and other school fees and allowances for education-related expenses.

The enactment of this legislative proposal into law will not only ensure that deserving graduates can help supply the critical mass of human capital needed in various professions and industries, but more importantly, contribute to the development and generation of a competitive Filipino workforce.

In view of the foregoing, approval of this bill is earnestly requested.


FERDINAND MARTIN G. ROMUALDEZ


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. *Short Title.* – This Act shall be known as the “Presidential Merit
Scholarship Program Act”.

SEC. 2. *Declaration of Policy.* – It is the declared policy of 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. It is also
mandated to establish and maintain 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.

Towards this end, the State shall institutionalize a Presidential Merit Scholarship Program that will enable deserving students enrolled in priority courses to earn a college degree and eventually become part of the workforce in sectors that are very hard to fill, but aligned with national workforce needs, as well as help address the goal of developing globally competitive Filipino professionals.

SEC. 3. Objectives. – The Presidential Merit Scholarship Program shall have the following objectives:

(a) To provide full financial support to top-performing students from low-income to middle-income households for the pursuit of priority academic programs in high-ranking higher education institutions (HEIs);

(b) To cultivate a competitive and highly skilled workforce by supporting scholars in courses addressing hard-to-fill occupations; and

(c) To complement existing government scholarship programs by covering academically exceptional students not eligible under other financial assistance mechanisms.

SEC. 4. *Institutionalization of the Presidential Merit Scholarship Program.* – The Presidential Merit Scholarship Program established by the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) is hereby institutionalized under this Act and hereinafter referred to as the PMSP.

SEC. 5. *Coverage of the PMSP.* – The PMSP under this Act shall be made available to deserving senior high school graduates who pass the admission requirements of a state university/college (SUC) or local university/college (LUC) or private higher education institution (PHEI) where he or she wishes to enroll in and pursue a college degree in any of the priority courses of the CHED.

The student financial assistance for the PMSP, which shall be released directly to the student through the HEIs, shall include the following:

- (a) Free tuition and other school fees;
- (b) Allowance for prescribed books, supplies, and internet connectivity;
- (c) Clothing or uniform allowance;
- (d) Allowance for dormitory/boarding house accommodation or transportation;
and
- (j) Other education-related miscellaneous subsistence or living allowances.

SEC. 6. *Qualification Requirements.* - An applicant for the PMSP shall possess the following qualifications:

- (a) Must be a Filipino citizen residing in the Philippines;
- (b) Must be a graduating senior high school student or graduate with a minimum general weighted average of ninety-three percent (93%) or its equivalent;
- (c) Must have passed the entrance examination and complied with other related requirements for admission in the SUC, LUC, or PHEI where the scholar intends to enroll, as well as the other requirements of the CHED, including enrollment in a priority program; and
- (d) Combined gross annual income of parents or legal guardian should not exceed Five Hundred Thousand Pesos (P500,000.00).

SEC. 7. *Disqualifications.* - The scholarship grant shall terminate, and the scholar shall repay the full cost of scholarship and related benefits received,

including all the expenses incurred during the participation in the scholarship program in case of the following circumstances:

- (a) If the scholar accepts another scholarship from other government or private agency or entity while enjoying the benefits under this Act;
- (b) If the scholar fails to meet the academic requirements or to complete the course within the prescribed period without valid cause as may be determined by the SUC, LUC, or PHEI, or the CHED through appropriate regulations, such as absence without notice, willful neglect, or other causes within the control of the scholar; and
- (c) If the scholar commits gross misconduct in a manner that would bring significant damage to the SUC, LUC, or PHEI concerned or to the community as a whole.

SEC. 8. *Appropriations.* - The amount necessary to carry out the implementation of this Act shall be charged against the current year's appropriation of the CHED.

Thereafter, the amount necessary for the continuous implementation of the PMSP under this Act shall be included in the annual General Appropriations Act.

SEC. 9. *Transitory Provisions.* - Upon the effectivity of this Act, current scholars under the existing PMSP of the CHED shall automatically be eligible to avail the benefits under this Act.

SEC. 10. *Joint Congressional Oversight Committee on PMSP.* - There is hereby created a Joint Congressional Oversight Committee to oversee, monitor, and evaluate the implementation of this Act.

The Oversight Committee shall be composed of five (5) members each from the Senate and from the House of Representatives, and shall include the following: Chairperson of the Senate Committee on Higher, Technical and Vocational Education; Chairperson of the House Committee on Higher and Technical Education; and three (3) members each to be chosen from the membership of the Senate Committee on Higher, Technical and Vocational Education, and the House Committee on Higher and Technical Education by the Senate President and the House Speaker, respectively: *Provided*, That at least one (1) member from the respective nominees of the House of Representatives and the Senate shall be chosen from the Minority party/bloc.

SEC. 11. *Implementing Rules and Regulations.* — Within sixty (60) days from the effectivity of this Act, the CHED shall, in coordination with the Department of Education, Philippine Association of State Universities and Colleges, Association of Local Colleges and Universities, Coordinating Council of Private Educational Associations, DBM, SUCs, LUCs, PHEIs, and other relevant stakeholders, formulate and issue the rules and regulations to fully implement the provisions of this Act: *Provided*, That the absence of the implementing rules and regulations shall not affect the effectivity of this Act and the grant of benefits provided therein.

SEC. 12. *Separability Clause.* — If any part or provisions of this Act is declared invalid or unconstitutional, the remainder of this Act or any provision not affected thereby shall remain in force and effect.

SEC. 13. *Repealing Clause.* — All laws, decrees, executive orders, proclamations, and rules and regulations, or any parts thereof which are inconsistent with the provisions of this Act shall be revoked, repealed, amended, or modified accordingly.

SEC. 14. *Effectivity*. – This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its publication in the *Official Gazette* or in a newspaper of general circulation.

Approved,