

Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Quezon City

TWENTIETH CONGRESS
First Regular Session

HOUSE BILL NO. 6038



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

AN ACT
ESTABLISHING THE PRESIDENTIAL MERIT SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM,
PROVIDING FUNDS THEREFOR, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES

EXPLANATORY NOTE

This measure is firmly grounded in Article XIV, Section 2(3) of the 1987 Constitution which explicitly provides that:

"The State shall 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" (emphasis supplied).

The Presidential Merit Scholarship Program reinforces the State's constitutional mandate to make quality education accessible by providing direct financial assistance to the top one percent (1%) of students in all higher education institutions (HEIs). Under this Program, qualified scholars shall receive Twenty Thousand Pesos (P20,000.00) per academic year to support the continuation of their tertiary studies.

While Republic Act No. 10931, or the Universal Access to Quality Tertiary Education Act, covers free tuition and miscellaneous fees in state universities and colleges, students continue to struggle with the substantial burden of education-related expenses that hinder college completion.

According to the EDCOM II Year Two Report, higher education institutions (HEIs) nationwide face a 39% attrition rate, with nearly four in ten students discontinuing their college education before completion.¹ Findings from the Philippine Institute for Development Studies (PIDS) likewise indicate that leading reasons for leaving college are the need to work (44%), and financial struggles at (20%).²

Second Congressional Commission on Education [EDCOM II]. (2025). EDCOM II Year 2 Report: Fixing the Foundations. <https://edcom2.gov.ph/media/2025/01/EDCOM-2-Year-2-Report-Fixing-the-Foundations-2025.pdf>) Accessed on 30 October 2025

² Untalan, S. (2025, September 2). *4 in 10 students dropping out of college despite free tuition — EDCOM*. GMA News Online. <https://www.gmanetwork.com/news/topstories/nation/957780/4-in-10-students-dropping-out-of-college-despite-free-tuition-edcom/story/>

A survey conducted in Cagayan Valley by the Philippine Institute for Development Studies (PIDS) found a positive relationship between financial aid and students' intention to re-enroll, with recipients of aid being 38% more likely to indicate plans to continue their studies.³

These findings highlight that financial hardship remains one of the most pressing barriers to academic persistence and success. Given the government's limited resources, it is essential to extend financial support to students who demonstrate both exceptional academic potential and strong likelihood of completing their tertiary education.

Given that equitable access to tertiary education constitutes a fundamental pathway to social mobility, enhanced labor competitiveness, and sustained national development, it is imperative that outstanding academic merit be duly recognized and supported by the State.

To this end, no student's pursuit of higher learning should be curtailed by financial incapacity, nor should economic constraints impede the fulfillment of their academic and professional potential.

In view thereof, immediate approval of this bill is earnestly sought.


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

³ de Leon, M. J. B., Ayunon, C. C., Balagan, M. M. B. E., & Lara, K. J. A. (2025). Strengthening tertiary enrollment through financial aid: Insights from a survey in Cagayan Valley (PIDS Discussion Paper Series No. 2025-11). Philippine Institute for Development Studies. <https://pidswebs.pids.gov.ph/CDN/document/pidsdps2511.pdf>

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

SECTION 1. *Short Title.* – This Act shall be known as the “Presidential Merit Scholarship Act.”

SEC. 2. *Declaration of Policy.* – It is hereby declared the policy of the State to promote the right of all citizens to quality education at all levels. The State recognizes the crucial role of academic excellence in nation-building and shall endeavor to identify, nurture, and empower exceptionally talented students. This Act aims to provide financial assistance and incentivized public service opportunities to most outstanding college students, ensuring that their potential is maximized for the greater good and the advancement of the Philippines.

SEC. 3. *Establishment of the Presidential Merit Scholarship Program.* – There is hereby established the Presidential Merit Scholarship Program (PMSP), a national scholarship program to be administered by the Commission on Higher Education (CHED).

SEC. 4. *Eligibility and Automatic Scholarship.* – The top one percent (1%) of students enrolled in public and private higher education institutions (HEIs) duly accredited by CHED shall be eligible for the PMSP, based on their academic performance at the end of each academic year, in each college or department within an HEI, and shall automatically qualify as Presidential Merit Scholars for the succeeding academic year, subject to the availability of funds and continued academic excellence. For purposes of this Act, academic performance shall be determined by the cumulative General Weighted Average (GWA) or the equivalent grading system of the students within their respective college or department, as certified by the Registrar of the HEI. The CHED shall establish the guidelines for the ranking of students.

SEC. 5. *Scholarship Benefits.* – Each qualified Presidential Merit Scholar shall receive a scholarship grant of Twenty Thousand Pesos (Php 20,000.00) per academic year: *Provided*, That it shall be used to cover tuition and other school fees, books, supplies, and other education-related expenses: *Provided*, further,

That it shall be disbursed directly to the scholar or their HEI, as may be determined by CHED, in accordance with its implementing rules and regulations.

SEC. 6. *Implementing Rules and Regulations.* – Within ninety (90) days from the effectivity of this Act, the CHED shall, in consultation with the other relevant agencies, promulgate the necessary rules and regulations for its effective implementation.

SEC. 7. *Appropriations.* – The amount necessary for the initial implementation of this Act shall be charged against the current year's appropriations of CHED. Thereafter, such sums as may be necessary for the continued implementation of this Act shall be included in the annual General Appropriations Act (GAA).

SEC. 8. *Separability Clause.* – If any provision or part hereof is declared unconstitutional, the remainder of this Act or any provision not affected thereby shall remain in full force and effect.

SEC. 9. *Repealing Clause.* – All laws, decrees, executive orders, issuances, and rules and regulations or parts thereof which are contrary to and inconsistent with this Act are hereby repealed, amended or modified accordingly.

SEC. 10. *Effectivity.* – This act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its publication in the *Official Gazette* or in at least two (2) newspapers of general circulation.

Approved,