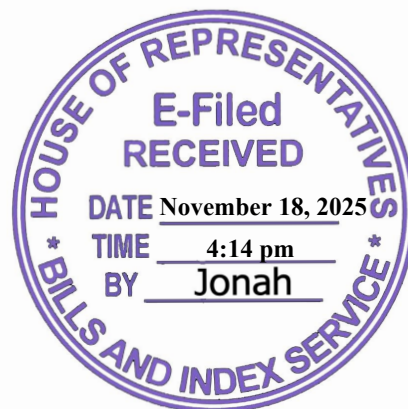


Republic of the Philippines  
**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**  
Quezon City

20th CONGRESS  
First Regular Session

HOUSE BILL NO. 6151



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Introduced by **REP. JUAN CARLOS "ARJO" C. ATAYDE**

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

**EXPLANATORY NOTE**

Consistent with the constitutional mandate 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* the State must ensure that access to higher education is not constrained by socio-economic barriers but instead guided by merit, talent, and commitment to national development.

While the government has implemented various scholarship and financial assistance programs to expand access to tertiary education, many academically exceptional students from low- to middle-income households remain underserved.

This proposed bill seeks to address this gap by establishing a national scholarship program that identifies and supports the most outstanding graduates of public senior high schools across the country. The proposed *Presidential Merit Scholarship Program* will provide comprehensive financial assistance that will cover tuition, living allowances, and learning resources. This is to enable these scholars to pursue priority academic programs in high-ranking higher education institutions (HEIs).

By investing in the academic and personal growth of the nation's brightest students, this bill envisions the creation of a merit-based, socially responsive

scholarship system that promotes upward mobility, excellence, and civic responsibility. The bill reaffirms the State's commitment to nurturing future leaders whose competence and integrity will shape the country's development in the years to come.

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

  
JUAN CARLOS "ARJO" C. ATAYDE

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**PROVIDING FUNDS THEREFOR, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES**

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

3        **SECTION 1. Short Title.** - " This Act shall be known as the "*Presidential Merit*  
4        *Scholarship Act*"

5        **SEC. 2. Declaration of Policy.** - It is hereby declared that quality tertiary education  
6        is an inalienable right of all Filipinos, and it is the policy of the State to protect and  
7        promote the rights of all students to quality education at all levels. Accordingly, the  
8        State shall take appropriate steps to make such education accessible to all. Towards  
9        this end, the State recognizes and supports the nation's most academically gifted  
10       graduates of Philippine high schools, particularly those from low to middle-income  
11       families, and shall create pathways for these students to pursue higher education that  
12       matches their potential and prepares them for leadership and service in critical fields.

13       **SEC. 3. Objectives.** -The *Presidential Merit Scholarship Program* (hereinafter the  
14       *Program*) shall have the following objectives:

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

- 1 (b) To cultivate a competitive and highly skilled workforce by supporting  
2 scholars in courses addressing hard-to-fill occupations;
- 3 (c) To complement existing government scholarship programs by covering  
4 academically exceptional students not eligible under other financial assistance  
5 mechanisms; and
- 6 (d) To institutionalize mechanisms for return service and social contribution by  
7 scholar-graduates.

8 **SEC. 4. Definition of Terms. – As used in this Act:**

- 9 (a) **Cost of Tertiary Education** - includes tuition and other mandatory school  
10 fees, educational expenses, and cost-of-living allowances;
- 11 (b) **Higher Education or Undergraduate Course** - refers to post-secondary  
12 programs leading to undergraduate or bachelor's degree;
- 13 (c) **Higher Education Institution (HEI)** - means any CHED-authorized  
14 university or college offering bachelor's courses;
- 15 (d) **Local Universities and Colleges (LUCs)** - refer to CHED-accredited public  
16 HEIs established and funded by local government units, compliant with CHED  
17 standards;
- 18 (e) **Low to Middle-Income Households** - refer to households with a combined  
19 monthly income that is equivalent to or above the Poverty Threshold, as  
20 determined by the Department of Economy, Planning, and Development  
21 (DEPDev) in coordination with other relevant government agencies.
- 22 (f) **Private HEIs** - are HEIs not owned or controlled by the government;
- 23 (g) **Presidential Merit Scholar** - refers to a student who has been granted a  
24 scholarship under this Act;
- 25 (h) **Priority Courses** - refer to courses identified by CHED with an issued Center  
26 for Excellence, addressing hard-to-fill occupations and serving the national  
27 interest;
- 28 (i) **Return Service Agreement** - refers to the mandatory service obligation of  
29 scholars to the Philippine government upon completion of their studies.
- 30 (j) **State Universities and Colleges (SUCs)** - refer to national government HEIs

governed by independent boards of trustees; and

(k) **Tuition Fees** - refer to charges for academic courses enrolled in by tertiary-level students.

**SEC. 5. Program Coverage and Eligibility.** - The Program shall cover eligible Filipino students who:

(a) Belong to the top ten (10) of their Senior High School graduating class as certified by their school principal;

(b) Graduated with highest honors or its equivalent;

(c) Have graduated from any public Senior High School within two (2) years prior to application;

(d) Have gained admission to a CHED-recognized HEI with the following qualifications:

1. For SUCs: Level III or IV; or

2. For Private HEIS: Autonomous or deregulated status; or

3. Inclusion in global university rankings within the past three (3) years;

(e) Shall enroll in CHED-identified priority degree programs housed in Centers of Excellence;

(f) Is not a recipient of other government funded scholarship grants; and

(g) Belong to low to middle-income households.

**Automatic Admission Provision.** For the first two (2) years of the Program's implementation, top five (5) public high school graduates, regardless of the academic honor received, are granted priority scholarship placement in eligible SUCs within their region, subject to compliance with the academic and admission

requirements.

**SEC. 6. Scholarship Benefits.** - Scholars shall be entitled to the following financial benefits per academic year, subject to satisfactory academic performance:

**A. Tuition Support -**

1. SUCs: Free tuition under the Universal Access to Quality Tertiary Education Act;

2. Private HEIs: Tuition and miscellaneous support, per academic year, capped at:

- i. For HEIs located in the National Capital Region (NCR): P200,000;
- ii. For HEIs located in Highly Urbanized Cities (HUCs) outside NCR: P100,000;
- iii. For HEIs located in non-HUC areas: P50,000.

**B. Yearly Stipend -** To be released to the Presidential Merit Scholar.

- 1. For scholars from Visayas or Mindanao studying in NCR: P200,000;
- 2. For scholars studying outside their home region: P150,000;
- 3. For scholars studying within their region of residence: P100,000.

**C. Book and Connectivity Allowance -** P5,000 per semester or trimester, including mid-year or its equivalent.

The receipt by a Presidential Merit Scholar of scholarships or similar benefits granted by foundations, corporations, or other private entities shall not operate to disqualify or diminish their entitlement to the benefits provided under this Act.

**Periodic Review and Adjustment.** CHED shall conduct a review of the benefit structure under this Section every five (5) years and shall submit its findings and recommendations to Congress for appropriate legislative action,

1 particularly with respect to necessary adjustments due to inflation, regional  
2 disparities, or evolving educational costs.

3 **SEC. 7. Institutional Support and Responsibilities. --**

4 **A. Commission on Higher Education (CHED). CHED shall:**

- 5 1. Oversee implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of the Program;  
6 2. Review demographic and academic performance data of Senior High  
7 School graduates to inform policy refinements;  
8 3. Ensure SUCs' compliance with admission and performance standards;  
9 and  
10 4. Provide academic advising and placement mechanisms in partnership  
11 with HEIS.

12 **B. Department of Education (DepEd). DepEd shall:**

- 13 1. Identify and certify the top ten (10) graduates and additional eligible  
14 students in public high schools;  
15 2. Conduct and submit an annual census of graduating students to  
16 CHED;  
17 3. Disseminate timely information about the Program to all public high  
18 schools; and  
19 4. Ensure the integrity and timeliness of ranking  
20 certifications.

21  
22 **C. State Universities and Colleges (SUCs). SUCs shall:**

- 23 1. Allocate slots and provide academic support to scholars;  
24 2. Offer bridging programs, **when** necessary, to assist scholars who  
25 marginally fail to meet academic program requirements;  
26 3. Coordinate with CHED in implementing internship and return service  
27 programs; and

1           4. Submit annual reports on enrolled scholars, academic outcomes, and  
2           program challenges to CHED and Congress.

3           **SEC. 8. Return Service Agreement.** – All beneficiaries of the Presidential Merit  
4           Scholarship shall be required to enter into a Return Service Agreement (RSA) with  
5           the government, under the following terms and conditions:

6           (a) The scholar shall complete a research output, thesis, or equivalent scholarly  
7           work that demonstrates practical relevance and contributes to national  
8           development goals or government policy initiatives;

9           (b) The scholar shall render return service to the Republic of the Philippines for  
10          a period equivalent to the number of academic years for which scholarship  
11          benefit was received; and

12          (c) In the event that the scholar is unable to commence such return service  
13          immediately after graduation due to unemployment or other justifiable reasons,  
14          except employment abroad, the required period of return service shall remain  
15          unaffected by such delay or deferment and shall be computed in accordance  
16          with the duration prescribed under paragraph (b).

17  
18          **SEC. 9. Preferential Consideration for Government Service.** – Presidential  
19          Merit Scholars shall be accorded preferential consideration in recruitment and  
20          hiring in the national government, its agencies and instrumentalities, as well as in  
21          local government units, subject to existing civil service rules and regulations.

22  
23          **SEC. 10. Program Monitoring and Evaluation.** – CHED shall undertake robust  
24          and periodic evaluation of the Program's effectiveness. It shall conduct impact  
25          assessments every five (5) years using key indicators such as:

26  
27          (a) Enrollment and graduation rates;

28          (b) Post-graduation employment and income levels;

29          (c) Contribution to public service and underserved sectors; and

30          (d) Geographic and socio-economic reach of the Program.

1  
2 CHED may commission studies and adopt appropriate methodologies to assess  
3 program outcomes. CHED, in coordination with the Department of Budget and  
4 Management (DBM) and the Civil Service Commission (CSC), shall determine the  
5 required plantilla positions necessary for the monitoring and evaluation of the  
6 implementation of this Act.

7 **SEC. 11. Implementing Rules and Regulations.** – Within ninety (90) days from  
8 the effectivity of this Act, CHED, in coordination with the Department of Education  
9 (DepEd), state universities and colleges (SUCs), Department of Economy, Planning,  
10 and Development (DEPDev), Civil Service Commission (CSC), and in consultation  
11 with relevant stakeholders, shall promulgate the implementing rules and  
12 regulations necessary for the effective implementation of this Act.

13 **SEC. 12. Appropriations.** – The amount necessary for the initial  
14 implementation of this Act shall be charged against the current fiscal year's  
15 appropriations of CHED. Thereafter, such sums as may be necessary for the  
16 continued implementation shall be included in the annual General Appropriations  
17 Act.

18 **SEC. 13. Separability Clause.** – If any provision of this Act is held  
19 unconstitutional or invalid, the remaining provisions not affected thereby shall  
20 continue in full force and effect.

21 **SEC. 14. Repealing Clause.** – All laws, rules, regulations, or parts thereof  
22 inconsistent with the provisions of this Act are hereby repealed or amended  
23 accordingly.

24 **SEC. 15. Effectivity.** – This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days following its  
25 complete publication in the *Official Gazette* or in a newspapers of general  
26 circulation.

27 *Approved,*