Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Quezon City

TWENTIETH CONGRESS
First Regular Session

House Bill No. 6809

Introduced by **REP. JAVIER MIGUEL L. BENITEZ**

EXPLANATORY NOTE

The Technical Education and Skills Development Authority ("TESDA") issues National Certificates ("NC") to individuals who have successfully passed competency assessments. These certificates validate skills and qualifications and are widely recognized across industries, both locally and internationally.

At present, free assessment is available only to TESDA scholars or through limited programs such as the Competency Assessment and Certification for Workers (CACW). However, many Filipinos outside these programs remain unable to obtain certification due to prohibitive assessment fees, effectively limiting their employability and economic mobility.

A study by the Philippine Institute for Development Studies emphasized that NCs significantly improve the employability of graduates and job seekers. Still, those unable to afford the exam are deprived of certification and, consequently, employment opportunities. The study recommended establishing government mechanisms to support individuals required to take NC exams but unable to afford the costs.[1]

As part of its broader efforts to promote lifelong learning, TESDA has also introduced the Recognition of Prior Learning ("RPL"),[2] which acknowledges skills and knowledge acquired through work or life experience. This pathway benefits industry workers, out-of-school youth, and informal-sector workers who already possess competencies but require certification. Ensuring free assessment

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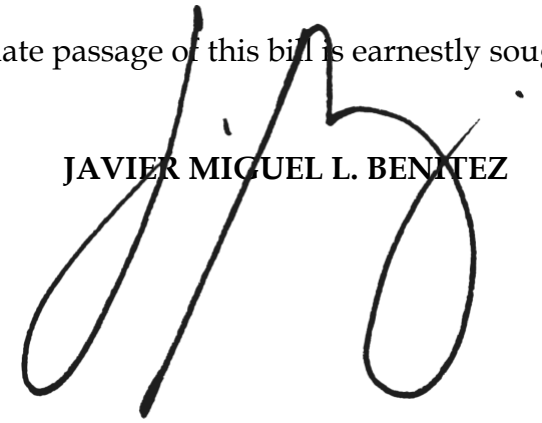
[1] Brillantes, K., et al. (2019). Status of Senior High School Implementation: A Process Evaluation. Discussion Paper Series No. 2019-13.

[2] TESDA Circular No. 090, s. 2021

for National Certification will further complement initiatives such as RPL by removing financial barriers that prevent individuals from obtaining formal recognition of their skills.

This measure seeks to institutionalize free TESDA assessments for all non-scholar applicants, regardless of financial status, thereby expanding access to certification, improving employment opportunities, and ensuring Filipino workers are better equipped to meet industry standards.

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



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Introduced by **REP. JAVIER MIGUEL L. BENITEZ**

AN ACT GRANTING FREE ASSESSMENT FOR THE ISSUANCE OF NATIONAL CERTIFICATES BY THE TECHNICAL EDUCATION AND SKILLS DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY (TESDA) TO NON-SCHOLAR APPLICANTS, AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR

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 "*NC-FREE (National Certification – Free Registration for Evaluation & Examination Act) Act.*"

SEC. 2. ***Declaration of Policy.*** **–** It is the policy of the State to promote equal access to opportunities for employment and human development by removing financial barriers to certification. To this end, the State shall ensure equitable access to technical education and skills development by providing free competency assessment and certification to applicants who are not otherwise covered by the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority ("TESDA") scholarship or financial assistance programs.

SEC. 3. ***Coverage.*** **–** The assessment fee and the issuance of National Certificates (NC I, II, III, and IV) administered by the TESDA shall be free of charge for all non-scholar applicants: Provided, That the beneficiary is qualified to undergo assessment as prescribed under Section IV of the Training Regulation of the qualification in which he or she seeks to be assessed.

SEC. 4. ***Implementing Agency.*** **–** The TESDA shall be the primary implementing agency of this Act, and shall:

(a) Administer the assessment through its accredited assessment centers nationwide; and

(b) Submit an annual report to Congress on the implementation of this Act, including the number of beneficiaries served, budget utilization, and employment outcomes. Such a report shall also include challenges encountered and recommendations for policy or budget adjustments.

SEC. 5. ***Appropriations.*** **–** The amount necessary for the initial implementation of this Act shall be charged against the current appropriations of TESDA. Thereafter, any sums necessary for its continued implementation shall be included in the annual General Appropriations Act.

SEC. 6. ***Prohibited Acts.*** **–** It shall be unlawful for any person, assessment center, or institution to collect assessment fees from beneficiaries covered by this Act or to engage in any fraudulent activity in relation to the availment of free assessment. Violations shall be subject to administrative sanctions as determined by TESDA, without prejudice to the filing of appropriate civil or criminal cases under existing laws.

SEC. 7. ***Separability Clause.*** **–** If any provision of this Act is declared unconstitutional or invalid, the other provisions not affected thereby shall remain in full force and effect.

SEC. 8. ***Repealing Clause.*** **–** All laws, decrees, orders, rules, and regulations, or parts thereof, inconsistent with this Act are hereby repealed or modified accordingly.

SEC. 9. ***Effectivity.*** **–** This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its publication in the Official Gazette or in a newspaper of general circulation.

Approved,