

Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Quezon City

TWENTIETH CONGRESS
First Regular Session

House Bill No. **6816**



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

EXPLANATORY NOTE

One of the persistent challenges in Philippine development is the intergenerational cycle of rural poverty, especially among agricultural households. Education is a proven pathway to break this cycle, yet for many children of farmers and fisherfolk, the high cost of schooling remains a significant barrier. While the right to education is constitutionally guaranteed, economic exclusion continues to prevent thousands of rural youth from completing their studies.

The 1987 Constitution of the Republic of the Philippines mandates that the State promote social justice in all phases of national development and prioritize the welfare of farmers and fisherfolk.¹ Despite overall improvements in national poverty rates, 2023 data from the Philippine Statistics Authority show that farmers and fisherfolk remain among the poorest sectors, with poverty incidence rates of 27.0% and 27.4%, respectively. Poverty in rural areas was recorded at 22.1%, more than double that of urban areas, underscoring the persistent geographic and sectoral disparities affecting food producers.

The Philippines has implemented programs to expand educational access for the children of agricultural and fisheries workers. Among these is the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources' Fisheries Scholarship Program of the Department of Agriculture ("DA"), which grants full college scholarships to qualified high school graduates pursuing a Bachelor of Science in Fisheries. While

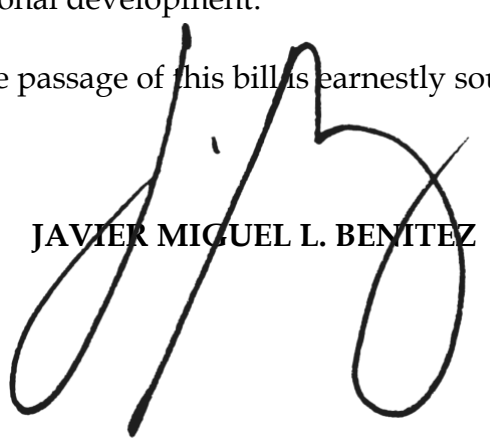
¹ 1987 Constitution, Article XIII, Section 5.

laudable, the program is limited to tertiary education and applies only to a single degree track.²

This bill addresses those gaps by establishing a broader, institutionalized educational assistance program for the children and dependents of farmers and fisherfolk listed in the Registry System for Basic Sectors in Agriculture (“RSBSA”). It guarantees support for basic through tertiary education in public schools, including subsidies for educational materials, transportation, lodging, clothing, and other essential needs, without limiting choice of course or field of study at the tertiary level.

This bill is filed as a counterpart to a measure introduced by Senator Mark Villar in the Senate, and is consistent with similar proposals filed in both chambers of Congress. Its filing affirms a shared legislative commitment to reducing rural poverty, expanding equitable access to education, and honoring the essential contributions of food producers to national development.

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



JAVIER MIGUEL L. BENITEZ

² Department of Agriculture, Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources (BFAR). Scholarship. Fisheries Scholarship Program. <https://www.bfar.da.gov.ph/opportunities/scholarship/>. (Date last accessed: July 31, 2025).

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**AN ACT PROVIDING FOR EDUCATIONAL ASSISTANCE TO CHILDREN
AND DEPENDENTS OF FARMERS AND FISHERFOLK, PROVIDING
FUNDS THEREOF**

*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 “*Tanim-Dunong
Act.*”

**SEC. 2. *Educational Assistance for Children and Dependents of Farmers
and Fisherfolk.*** – Children and dependents of farmers and fisherfolk listed in the
RSBSA shall be entitled to educational assistance from basic education until they
complete tertiary education in a public school. The educational assistance
includes free educational materials, board and lodging, transportation, clothing,
and similar expenses.

SEC. 3. *Special Funds for Educational Benefits.* – To carry out the
provisions of this Act, there is hereby established a Special Fund, to be known as
the "Educational Benefits for Farmers and Fisherfolk Fund", in the amount of Fifty
Million Pesos (P50,000,000.00). Such Fund shall be perpetually maintained and
used exclusively for the benefit of children and dependents of farmers and
fisherfolk; *Provided, That* not more than 5% of this Fund shall be used for the
administration of the Special Fund.

SEC. 4. *Administration of the Fund.* - The Unified Student Financial Assistance System for Tertiary Education Governing (“UniFAST”) Board, in consultation with the DA and three (3) representatives from the farmers and fisherfolks selected from a verified procedure of selection as agreed upon by the farmers and fisherfolks, shall have the primary responsibility of managing and supervising the Fund. It shall also formulate policies, implement rules and regulations, and guidelines, and perform other related functions to oversee, manage, and supervise the Fund's operations.

The UniFAST Secretariat shall serve as the Secretariat, providing administrative support to the Board, and shall perform functions as authorized by the UniFAST Board.

SEC. 5. *Implementing Rules and Regulations.* - Within sixty (60) days from the effectivity of this Act, the UniFAST Board, in consultation with the DA, shall promulgate the implementing rules and regulations for this Act.

SEC. 6. *Separability Clause.* - If any section or provision of this Act shall be declared unconstitutional or invalid, the other sections or provisions not affected thereby shall remain in full force and effect.

SEC. 7. *Repealing Clause.* - All laws, decrees, executive orders, rules, and regulations or parts thereof which are inconsistent with this Act are hereby repealed, amended, or modified accordingly.

SEC. 8. *Effectivity.* - This Act shall take effect after fifteen (15) days following its complete publication in the Official Gazette or in a newspaper of general circulation.

Approved,