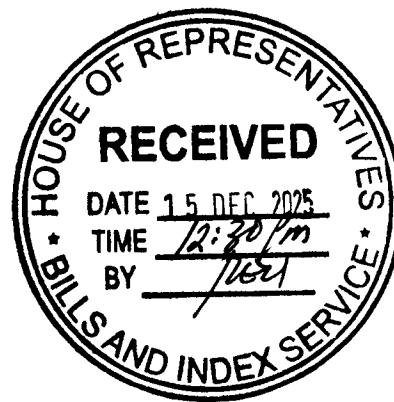


Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Quezon City, Metro Manila

Twentieth Congress
First Regular Session

HOUSE BILL NO. **6829**



Introduced by **Representative RAYMOND ADRIAN SALCEDA**

AN ACT
AMENDING REPUBLIC ACT NO. 10931, OTHERWISE KNOWN AS THE
“UNIVERSAL ACCESS TO QUALITY TERTIARY EDUCATION ACT,” BY
REMOVING THE DISQUALIFICATION OF DEGREE HOLDERS AND PRIOR
TECHNICAL VOCATIONAL GRADUATES FROM FREE TECHNICAL
VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING IN STATE RUN TECHNICAL
VOCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS, AND BY STRENGTHENING THE FUNDING
BASIS FOR FREE TECHNICAL VOCATIONAL EDUCATION

EXPLANATORY NOTE

Republic Act No. 10931, otherwise known as the *Universal Access to Quality Tertiary Education Act*, was enacted to remove financial barriers to tertiary education and expand access to learning opportunities for Filipinos. In many respects, the law succeeded. Enrollment in State Universities and Colleges (SUCs) and Local Universities and Colleges (LUCs) increased, and the immediate cost burden on families was reduced.

However, experience since the law’s enactment has revealed a significant design flaw that now requires correction.

Section 6(b)(1) of Republic Act No. 10931 excludes from free technical-vocational education and training (TVET) in State-run Technical-Vocational Institutions (TVIs) students who have already obtained a bachelor’s degree or who have completed a technical-vocational course equivalent to at least National Certificate III and above. This exclusion was introduced primarily on fiscal sustainability grounds.

In practice, this provision has produced unintended and adverse outcomes.

First, it weakened the country’s technical-vocational education system precisely at a time when labor market flexibility has become more important. Enrollment under the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA) declined significantly after the law’s implementation and did not recover to pre-law levels even after the pandemic period. Diploma-

level and institution-based training, which should serve as the backbone of reskilling and workforce adjustment, was particularly affected.

Second, the exclusion reinforced the mistaken perception that technical-vocational education is an inferior alternative to college education. By making college tuition universally free while restricting access to publicly funded TVET for degree holders and prior completers, policy signaled that education is a one-shot, linear pathway rather than a continuing process of skills acquisition and adaptation.

Third, this structure is increasingly misaligned with labor market realities. Many of the country's most dynamic employment generators—such as business process outsourcing, export-oriented manufacturing, hospitality, and a large share of overseas employment—do not privilege college diplomas. They are skills-based sectors. At the same time, a large proportion of higher education enrollment is concentrated in fields whose entry-level tasks are now being automated or compressed by advances in artificial intelligence. In this environment, restricting access to reskilling and second-chance education increases the risk of displacement and prolonged mismatch between credentials and labor demand.

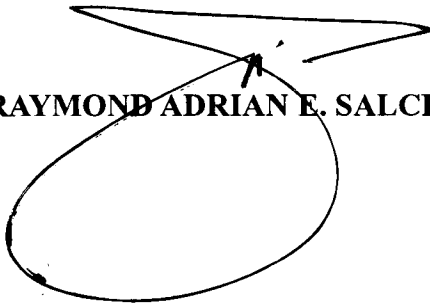
The intent of this amendatory bill is therefore narrow and corrective.

This measure removes the disqualification under Section 6(b)(1) of Republic Act No. 10931, thereby allowing all Filipino students, regardless of prior educational attainment, to avail of free technical-vocational education and training in State-run Technical-Vocational Institutions. It also strengthens the funding basis for free TVET to ensure that budgeting does not structurally suppress enrollment and training capacity.

This bill does not diminish the policy of free higher education. Rather, it restores balance within the tertiary education system by reaffirming the role of TVET as a continuing, flexible pathway for skills acquisition, reskilling, and workforce adaptation.

In an economy increasingly shaped by technological change, education policy must enable Filipinos not only to obtain their first credential, but also to adjust when markets, technology, or early choices move faster than degrees.

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



RAYMOND ADRIAN E. SALCEDA

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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 “Universal Access to Quality TVET Act.”

SEC. 2. Section 6(b)(1) of Republic Act No. 10931 is hereby amended by deleting the disqualification, so that Section 6(b) shall read as follows:

“SEC. 6. Exceptions to Free Tertiary Education.
The following students are ineligible to avail of the free tertiary education:

(a) In SUCs and LUCs:

(1) Students who have already attained a bachelor’s degree or comparable undergraduate degree from any HEI, whether public or private;

(2) Students who fail to comply with the admission and retention policies of the SUC or LUC;

(3) Students who fail to complete their bachelor’s degree or comparable undergraduate degree within a year after the period prescribed in their program;
and

(b) In State Run TVIs:

(1) Students who fail in any course enrolled in during the course of the program.

Students ineligible to avail of the free tertiary education shall be charged the tuition and other school fees, as determined by the respective boards of the

SUCs and LUCs, and in the case of the state run TVIs, to be determined by the TESDA.”

SEC. 3. The second paragraph of Section 5 of Republic Act No. 10931 is hereby amended to strengthen the funding basis for free TVET, to read as follows:

“SEC. 5. *Free TVET in Post-Secondary TVIs.* - All Filipino students who are currently enrolled at the time of the effectivity of this Act, or shall enroll at any time thereafter in any post-secondary TVET leading to nondegree certificate or diploma programs offered by any state-run TVI under the TESDA shall be exempt from paying tuition and other school fees: *Provided*, That all state-run TVIs shall create a mechanism to enable students with the financial capacity to pay for their education in the TVI to voluntarily opt out of the tuition and other school fees subsidy or make a contribution to the TVI. TVIs must report the tuition payments and contributions collected from these students.

“The amount required to implement the free tuition and other school fees in state run TVIs shall be determined by the governing board of the TESDA based on the number of enrollees as reported pursuant to Section 14 of this Act, the historical utilization rates of state run TVIs, and the authorized training capacity of each course and institution, which shall serve as the primary factors in computing the annual proposed budget of the TESDA for such purpose. This shall in turn serve as the baseline during the preparation of the annual National Expenditure Program by the Department of Budget and Management.”

SEC. 4. *Implementing Rules and Regulations.* — The Technical Education and Skills Development Authority, in consultation with the Department of Budget and Management, shall issue the implementing rules and regulations within ninety (90) days from the effectivity of this Act.

SEC. 5. *Separability Clause.* — If any provision of this Act is declared unconstitutional, the other provisions not affected shall remain in full force and effect.

SEC. 6. *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,