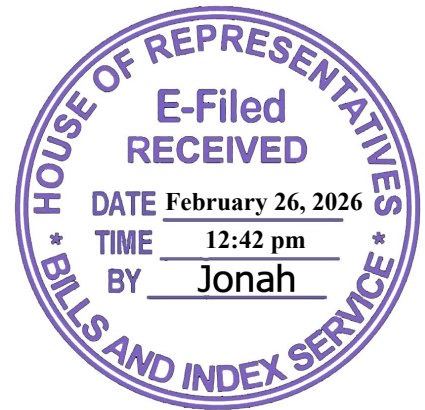


Republic of the Philippines  
**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**  
Quezon City, Metro Manila  
  
**TWENTIETH CONGRESS**  
First Regular Session  
  
HOUSE BILL NO. 8107



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Introduced by:

**HON. CHRISTOPHERSON "COCO" M. YAP**

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**AN ACT**

**EXPRESSLY EXEMPTING QUALIFIED CLIENTS OF THE LEGAL AID OFFICES OF THE INTEGRATED BAR OF THE PHILIPPINES FROM PAYMENT OF DOCKET AND OTHER LEGAL FEES IN COURTS AND QUASI-JUDICIAL BODIES, PROVIDING FOR COORDINATION WITH THE SUPREME COURT AND THE UNIFIED LEGAL AID SERVICE, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES**

**EXPLANATORY NOTE**

The Constitution guarantees that no Filipino should be denied access to the courts simply because they are poor. To carry out this promise, the Supreme Court has issued rules that allow indigent litigants, especially those assisted by legal aid lawyers, to be exempt from paying court fees. These rules are meant to ensure that people with valid cases can seek justice without being blocked by costs they cannot afford.

Despite these rules, many poor litigants assisted by the Integrated Bar of the Philippines (IBP) still face real problems. Some courts are unfamiliar with the exemption, while others require documents that are costly or difficult to obtain. Unlike clients of the Public Attorney's Office, who have a clear law granting fee exemptions, IBP legal aid clients often rely only on court rules, which are not always applied consistently, especially in quasi-judicial bodies and administrative proceedings.

This bill solves that problem by clearly stating in law that qualified IBP legal aid clients are exempt from paying docket and other lawful legal fees. It builds on existing Supreme Court standards to make the process uniform, fair, and protected against abuse, while keeping safeguards such as the right to question false claims of indigency.

By removing unnecessary financial barriers, the bill helps ensure that justice is truly accessible to the poor and that the constitutional right to legal relief is meaningful, not just promised.

In view of the foregoing, **ug sa ngalan sa SERBISYONG TINUORAY**, the undersigned respectfully requests the immediate passage of this measure.

  
**CHRISTOPHERSON "COCO" M. YAP**  
Representative, Second District of Southern Leyte

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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 “*IBP Legal Aid Fee Exemption Act*.”

**SECTION 2. Declaration of Policy.** — It is the policy of the State to ensure **free access to the courts and quasi-judicial bodies** and that **adequate legal assistance shall not be denied by reason of poverty**, and to remove financial barriers that prevent indigent litigants from pursuing meritorious claims or defenses.

**SECTION 3. Definition of Terms.** — For purposes of this Act:

- (a) **IBP Legal Aid Office** refers to the legal aid offices in local chapters of the Integrated Bar of the Philippines and/or legal aid mechanisms recognized by the IBP in accordance with Supreme Court issuances.
- (b) **Qualified IBP Legal Aid Client** refers to an indigent and deserving person who is accepted as a client by an IBP Legal Aid Office after compliance with

the **means and merit tests** and other eligibility requirements under applicable Supreme Court rules and IBP legal aid rules, as may be updated.

- (c) **Legal Fees** include docket, filing, sheriff's, mediation-related, and other lawful fees incidental to instituting or defending an action or proceeding, whether as an original action or on appeal, in courts and, to the extent allowed by the rules of the forum, in quasi-judicial bodies.

**SECTION 4. Statutory Exemption from Legal Fees for Qualified IBP Legal Aid Clients.** — A **Qualified IBP Legal Aid Client** shall be **exempt from payment of docket and other legal fees** incidental to instituting or defending an action or proceeding in:

- (a) All courts; and
- (b) Quasi-judicial bodies, to the extent permitted by their governing statutes and rules.

**SECTION 5. Proof of Indigency; Certification; Contest.** —

- (a) **Sufficient proof.** A **Certification of Indigency** issued by a covered lawyer in accordance with the Supreme Court's Unified Legal Aid Service (ULAS) rules, or its successor rules, shall be sufficient for the court to issue the authority of exemption from payment of docket and other lawful fees under Rule 3, Section 21 of the Rules of Court.
- (b) **Right to contest.** The adverse party may contest the grant of the authority of exemption before judgment, consistent with ULAS and Rule 3, Section 21 practice.
- (c) **Lien on favorable judgment.** The amount of legal fees from which the indigent was exempted shall be a lien on any favorable judgment, unless the court otherwise provides, consistent with existing rules.

**SECTION 6. Coordination with the Supreme Court and the Integrated Bar of the Philippines.** — Within ninety (90) days from the effectivity of this Act, the IBP shall coordinate with the Supreme Court, through the Office of the Court Administrator and such offices as may be designated, to ensure harmonized implementation consistent with Supreme Court rules on legal aid, exemption from legal fees, and court procedure.

**SECTION 7. Non-Diminution of Existing Exemptions; PAO Clients.** — Nothing in this Act shall be construed to diminish exemptions already granted by law or Supreme Court rule, including the statutory exemption of Public Attorney’s Office (PAO) clients from docket and other fees.

**SECTION 8. Separability Clause.** — If any provision of this Act is declared unconstitutional or invalid, the other provisions not affected shall remain in full force and effect.

**SECTION 9. Repealing Clause.** — All laws, decrees, orders, issuances or portions thereof, which are inconsistent with the provisions of this Act are hereby repealed or modified accordingly.

**SECTION 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,***