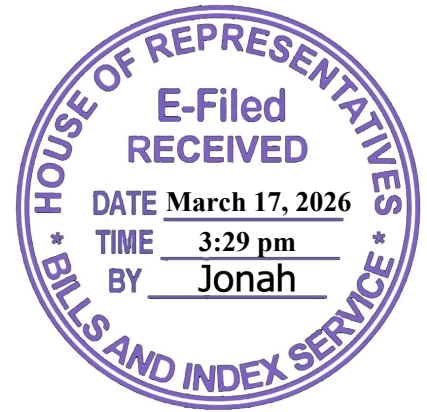


Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Quezon City

TWENTIETH CONGRESS
First Regular Session

HOUSE BILL NO. 8618



Introduced by **HON. BRIAN RAYMUND S. YAMSUAN**

AN ACT
PROHIBITING PUBLIC OR PRIVATE EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS FROM
PREVENTING THEIR DISADVANTAGED GRADUATING STUDENTS TO
PARTICIPATE IN THEIR GRADUATION CEREMONY FOR REASONS OF
OUTSTANDING FINANCIAL OR PROPERTY OBLIGATIONS, SUCH AS UNPAID
TUITION AND OTHER SCHOOL FEES

EXPLANATORY NOTE

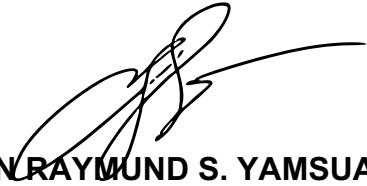
For many Filipino families, education has long stood as a lifeline and a pillar of hope. Thus, parents make daily sacrifices and students press on despite challenges, all anchored on the belief that education and perseverance can transform their lives. At the end of this journey thus lies a defining moment: graduation.

Graduation ceremonies are, therefore, more than a formal rite. They are the most tangible symbol of that hope fulfilled. Hence, to deny a student participation in this event—solely due to unpaid financial or property obligations—is to diminish that achievement and deny the families the opportunity to witness, with dignity, the fruits of their sacrifices.

To address this, the proposed measure prohibits educational institutions from preventing a student who has completed all academic requirements from participating in their graduation ceremony solely due to financial constraints that are beyond their control. It does so while recognizing the right of institutions to collect unpaid fees and ensuring that mechanisms are in place to identify those who are genuinely in need.

In preserving the significance of a graduation ceremony, we recognize the perseverance not only of our students but also of the families that have placed their hope in education. That hope, on the sole account of poverty or economic hardships, should not be taken away.

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

A stylized, handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of several loops and a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

BRIAN RAYMUND S. YAMSUAN

Representative

2nd District of Parañaque

Republic of the Philippines
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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 "Graduation Rites Act of 2026."

Sec. 2. Declaration of Policy. - It is the policy of the State to protect and promote the right of all citizens to quality education and to take appropriate steps to make education accessible to all, including ensuring that educational opportunities are made available to students regardless of their economic status. The State shall promote the right of all graduating students to an equal opportunity to participate in their graduation ceremony upon completion of their academic requirements for their respective programs.

Sec 3. Definition of Terms. - The following phrases, when used in this Act, shall have the meanings given to them in this section, unless the context clearly indicates otherwise:

- (a) Educational Institution - refers to all public and private establishments that provide instructional and/or educational services to individuals on all levels, including post-graduate and technical-vocational courses, holding a graduation ceremony;

- (b) Disadvantaged Graduating Student - refers to graduating students who have already completed their academic requirements, but for specific reasons, are unable to pay tuition, and other school fees; as certified by the Municipal, City or Provincial Social Welfare and Development Officer, or the Regional Office of the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD);
- (c) Graduation - refers to the conferment of an academic degree to the student after completing his or her academic requirements;
- (d) Graduation Ceremony - refers to the formal event at which a graduating student is awarded with a diploma and/or a certificate by an educational institution. It may also refer to a commencement exercise.

Sec. 4. Coverage. - This Act shall cover all, public and private basic (K to 12) institutions, higher education institutions, and technical-vocational institutions (TVIs): *Provided*, That in the case of TVIs, this Act shall only cover long-term courses exceeding one (1) year.

Sec. 5. Prohibition to Educational Institutions. - All public and private educational institutions covered by this Act are prohibited from disallowing Disadvantaged Graduating Students to attend their graduation ceremony, regardless of any balance or arrears to their payment of tuition fees, miscellaneous fees, and other school fees; *Provided*, That the Municipal, City or Provincial Social Welfare and Development Officer, or the Regional Office of the DSWD, as the case may be, shall issue the necessary certificate on the disadvantaged status of the student due to calamities, emergencies, force majeure and other good or justifiable reasons in accordance with the rules and regulations to be issued by the DSWD:

Provided, further, That this Act shall be without prejudice to the right and power of educational institutions to require the submission of a promissory note, withhold records and credentials of students and such other legal and administrative remedies available to them for the collection of unpaid fees: *Provided*, finally, That educational institutions may voluntarily, without need of the certification mentioned herein, allow a Disadvantaged student with outstanding tuition, miscellaneous, and other school fees to attend their graduation ceremony and release their relevant records and credentials in accordance with its policies, rules and regulations.

Sec. 6. Right of Educational Institution to Withhold Academic Documents. - Educational institutions may withhold the release of the actual diploma and/or other academic documents of the graduating students until all fees are paid by the latter.

Sec. 7. Administrative Sanctions. - All covered public and private educational institutions found guilty of violating Section 5 of this Act shall be subject to administrative sanctions that may be imposed by the Department of Education, Commission on Higher Education, and Technical Education and Skills Development Authority, as the case may be.

Sec. 8. Implementing Rules and Regulations (IRR). - The DSWD shall, in consultation with Department of Education, Commission on Higher Education, Technical Education and Skills Development Authority, Department of Interior and Local Government and relevant stakeholders, promulgate the rules and regulations defining "Disadvantaged Student" and the criteria and requirements for, and effectivity of, the issuance of a certification to that effect by the Municipal, City or Provincial Social Welfare and Development Officer, or the Regional Office of the DSWD, to effectively implement the provisions of this Act.

Sec. 9. Separability Clause. - If any provision of this Act or the application of such provision is declared unconstitutional, the remainder thereof not otherwise affected shall remain in full force and effect.

Sec 10. Repealing Clause. - All laws, presidential decrees, executive orders, letters of instruction, proclamations or administrative regulations that are inconsistent with the provisions of this Act are hereby repealed, modified, or amended accordingly.

Sec 11. Effectivity. This Act shall take effect after fifteen (15) days after its publication in the Official Gazette or in any newspaper of general circulation.

Approved,