

1 Republic of the Philippines
2 **HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**
3 Constitution Hills, Quezon City

4
5 **TWENTIETH CONGRESS**
6 First Regular Session

7
8 **HOUSE BILL NO. 8843**
9



10
11 Introduced by REP. JESUS "BONG" C. SUNTAY
12

13 **EXPLANATORY NOTE**
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15 Farmers and fisherfolks sustain the nation's food security, yet they continue to belong
16 to the poorest and most vulnerable sectors of Philippine society. Based on the
17 Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) data for 2021, poverty incidence reached 30.6%
18 among fisherfolks and 30.0% among farmers. More recent PSA data for 2023 still
19 show fisherfolks and farmers among the sectors with the highest poverty incidence,
20 at 27.4% and 27.0%, respectively, underscoring that poverty remains a persistent and
21 serious barrier to their families' well-being and opportunities.

22
23 One of the gravest consequences of this reality is the limited access of their children
24 and dependents to quality education. For many farming and fishing families, daily
25 survival takes precedence over school-related expenses, forcing their children to
26 study under severe financial strain or, in some cases, to abandon their education
27 altogether. This cycle of poverty deprives families not only of immediate
28 opportunities, but also of the long-term benefits that education provides in improving
29 income, mobility, and quality of life.

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31 This bill seeks to break that cycle by granting educational assistance to the children
32 and dependents of farmers and fisherfolk listed in the Registry System for Basic
33 Sectors in Agriculture (RSBSA), from basic education until completion of tertiary
34 education in public schools. The assistance covers essential educational needs such
35 as materials, board and lodging, transportation, clothing, and other similar expenses.
36 To ensure sustained implementation, the bill also creates an Educational Benefits for
37 Farmers and Fisherfolks Fund in the amount of ₱50,000,000.00, to be administered
38 by the Unified Student Financial Assistance System for Tertiary Education
39 (UNIFAST) Governing Board, in consultation with the Department of Agriculture
40 (DA) and representatives of the sectors concerned.

41
42 This proposed measure is both a social justice reform and an investment in national
43 development. By helping the children of farmers and fisherfolk stay in school and
44 finish their education, the State affirms its duty to make education truly accessible
45 while empowering families who have long borne the burden of poverty despite the
46 essential role they play in the country's economy. Strengthening educational access
47 for these sectors is a concrete step toward reducing intergenerational poverty,
48 promoting inclusive growth, and honoring the dignity of those who feed the nation.
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1 In view of the foregoing, the immediate passage of this bill is earnestly sought.
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8 **REP. JESUS "BONG" C. SUNTAY**
4th District, Quezon City

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12
13 **AN ACT PROVIDING FOR EDUCATIONAL ASSISTANCE TO CHILDREN**
14 **AND DEPENDENTS OF FARMERS AND FISHERFOLKS, PROVIDING**
15 **FUNDS THEREFOR**
16

17 Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the Philippines in
18 Congress assembled:

19
20 **SECTION 1. *Short Title.*** – This Act shall be known as the “*Educational Assistance*
21 *for Children and Dependents of Farmers and Fisherfolks Act.*”
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23 **SECTION 2. *Educational Assistance for Children and Dependents of***
24 ***Farmers and Fisherfolks.*** – Children and dependents of farmers and fisherfolks
25 listed in the Registry System for Basic Sectors in Agriculture (RSBSA) shall be entitled
26 educational assistance from basic education until their completion of tertiary
27 education in public school. The educational assistance includes free educational
28 materials, board and lodging, transportation expenses, clothing and other similar
29 expenses.
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31 **SECTION 3. *Appropriations of Special Funds for Educational Benefits.*** –
32 In order to carry out the provisions of this Act, there is hereby established a Special
33 Fund, to be known as the “Educational Benefits for Farmers and Fisherfolks Fund”,
34 in the amount of Fifty Million Pesos (₱50,000,000.00). Such Fund shall be
35 perpetually maintained and used exclusively for the benefit of children and
36 dependents of farmers and fisherfolks: *Provided*, That not more than 5% of this Fund
37 shall be used for the administration of the Special Fund.
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39 **SECTION 4. *Administration of the Fund.*** – The Unified Student Financial
40 Assistance System for Tertiary Education (UNIFAST) Governing Board, in
41 consultation with the Department of Agriculture (DA) and three (3) representatives
42 from the farmers and fisherfolks (selected from a verified procedure of selection as
43 agreed upon by the farmers and fisherfolks), shall have the primary responsibility of
44 managing and supervising the Fund. It should also formulate policies, implement
45 rules and regulations, guidelines and other related functions to oversee, manage and
46 supervise operations of the Fund.
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48 The UNIFAST Secretariat shall serve as the Secretariat providing administrative
49 support to the Governing Board and shall perform functions as authorized by the
50 UNIFAST Governing Board.

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2 **SECTION 5. *Implementing Rules and Regulations.*** – Within sixty (60) days
3 from the effectivity of this Act, the UNIFAST Governing Board, in consultation with
4 the DA, shall promulgate the rules and regulations to effectively implement the
5 provisions of this Act.
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7 **SECTION 6. *Separability Clause.*** – If any part, section or provision of this Act
8 is declared invalid or unconstitutional, the remainder of this Act or any other
9 provisions not affected by such declaration shall remain in full force and effect.
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11 **SECTION 7. *Repealing Clause.*** – All laws, acts, decrees, executive orders, rules,
12 and regulations, or other issuances or parts thereof which are contrary to and
13 inconsistent with the provisions of this Act are hereby repealed, amended or modified
14 accordingly.
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16 **SECTION 8. *Effectivity.*** – This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its
17 publication in the *Official Gazette* or in a newspaper of general circulation.
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19 Approved,