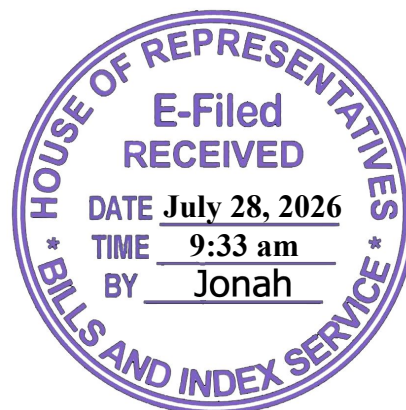


Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Quezon City, Metro Manila

TWENTIETH CONGRESS
Second Regular Session



HOUSE BILL NO. 10261

Introduced by
HON. ATTY. GERVILLE "JINKY BITRICS" R. LUISTRO

EXPLANATORY NOTE

Equal access to opportunities is a fundamental component of social justice and inclusive development. However, for many Indigenous Cultural Communities/Indigenous Peoples (ICCs/IPs), access to higher education, employment, professional licensure, scholarships, and government assistance is often constrained not only by geographic and socioeconomic disadvantages, but also by the financial costs associated with securing official school documents required for such opportunities.

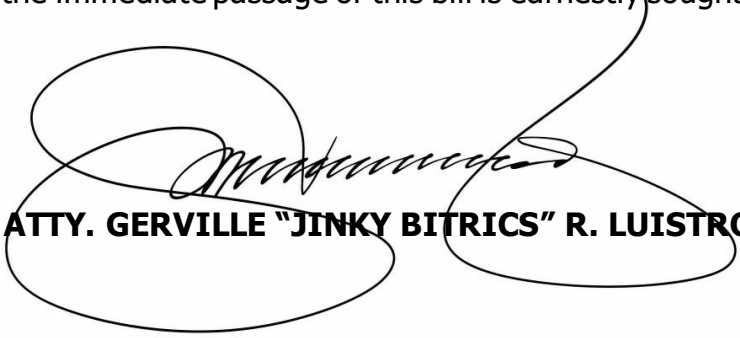
Official academic records, including transcripts of records, certificates, diplomas, and other school-issued credentials, are essential documentary requirements for educational advancement, employment, and participation in public and private sector opportunities. Although these documents are administrative in nature, the corresponding issuance and processing fees may impose an additional and avoidable burden on Indigenous Peoples, particularly those from geographically isolated, disadvantaged, and underserved communities.

Consistent with the State's constitutional mandate to promote social justice and protect the rights and welfare of Indigenous Cultural Communities/Indigenous Peoples under Republic Act No. 8371, otherwise known as the "Indigenous Peoples' Rights Act of 1997" (IPRA), this measure seeks to remove financial barriers by exempting Indigenous Peoples from the payment of fees in the procurement of official school documents from all educational institutions, whether public or private.

This exemption recognizes that access to essential academic credentials should not be hindered by economic constraints, and affirms the State's obligation to ensure equal opportunity in education, employment, and public service participation. By institutionalizing this policy, the State strengthens inclusive development and

enhances the capacity of Indigenous Peoples to fully participate in national social and economic life.

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



HON. ATTY. GERVILLE "JINKY BITRICS" R. LUISTRO

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AN ACT
EXEMPTING INDIGENOUS PEOPLES FROM FEES IN THE PROCUREMENT OF
OFFICIAL SCHOOL DOCUMENTS FROM ALL EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS,
AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the Philippines in*
2 *Congress assembled:*

3
4 **SECTION 1. Short Title.** - This Act shall be known as the "**Indigenous**
5 **Peoples School Documents Fee Exemption Act.**"

6
7 **SECTION 2. Declaration of Policy.** - It is hereby declared the policy of the
8 State to recognize, protect, and promote the rights and welfare of Indigenous Cultural
9 Communities/Indigenous Peoples (ICCs/IPs) by ensuring that financial barriers do not
10 impede their access to educational, employment, and other lawful opportunities.

11
12 The State recognizes that official school documents are indispensable in
13 pursuing further education, securing employment, obtaining professional licenses,
14 applying for scholarships, and accessing government programs and services.
15 Accordingly, the State shall exempt Indigenous Peoples from the payment of fees for
16 the procurement of official school documents from all educational institutions, whether
17 public or private, in order to promote equitable access to opportunities and uphold the
18 principles of social justice and inclusive development.

19
20
21 **SECTION 3. Definition of Terms.** - For purposes of this Act:

22
23 (a) **Educational Institution** refers to any public or private institution duly
24 recognized or authorized by the Department of Education (DepEd), the
25 Commission on Higher Education (CHED), or the Technical Education and Skills
26 Development Authority (TESDA), offering basic, secondary, technical-
27 vocational, tertiary, or higher education.

(b) **Fees** refers to any charge, payment, assessment, or monetary consideration imposed by an Educational Institution for the processing, issuance, authentication, certification, reproduction, or release of Official School Documents.

(c) **Graduate** refers to an Indigenous Peoples individual who has completed a program of study in an Educational Institution and is entitled to request Official School Documents under this Act.

(d) **Indigenous Peoples (IPs)** shall refer to Indigenous Cultural Communities/Indigenous Peoples (ICCs/IPs) as defined under Republic Act No. 8371, otherwise known as the *Indigenous Peoples' Rights Act of 1997*.

(e) **Learner** refers to any Indigenous Peoples student currently enrolled in an Educational Institution, regardless of the level of education.

(f) **Official School Documents** refers to records, certifications, or other academic documents officially issued by an Educational Institution, including but not limited to transcripts of records, certificates of enrollment, certificates of grades, certificates of graduation, diplomas, certificates of good moral character, authenticated copies of academic records, and other documents of similar nature required for educational, employment, professional, or lawful purposes.

(g) **Procurement** refers to the request, processing, issuance, certification, authentication, reproduction, or release of Official School Documents by an Educational Institution.

(h) **Qualified Beneficiary** refers to any Indigenous Peoples learner or graduate whose membership in an Indigenous Cultural Community/Indigenous Peoples has been duly certified or otherwise verified by the National Commission on Indigenous Peoples (NCIP) in accordance with existing laws, rules, and regulations.

SECTION 4. Covered Official School Documents. - For purposes of this Act, the exemption from fees shall apply to the procurement, issuance, authentication, certification, verification, reproduction, and release of Official School Documents, regardless of form, format, or purpose of use, whether for academic, employment, licensure, scholarship, or other lawful requirements, including but not limited to the following:

- (a) Certificates of Registration and Academic Standing
 - (i) Certificate of Registration (COR)
 - (ii) Report of Ratings (ROR)
 - (iii) Certificate of Good Moral Character

1 (b) Certificates and Academic Certifications

- 2 (i) Certificate (e.g., AHSE, CADD, and similar programs)
3 (ii) Certificate of Academic Completion
4 (iii) Certificate of Cross-Enrollment
5 (iv) Certificate of Enrollment
6 (v) Certificate of Expected to Graduate
7 (vi) Certificate of Grading System
8 (vii) Certificate of Graduation
9 (viii) Certificate of General Weighted Average (GWA), Grade Point
10 Average (GPA), Quality Point Average (QPA), or Quality Point Index
11 (QPI)
12 (ix) Certificate of Identification (ID)
13 (x) Certificate of No Objection
14 (xi) Certificate of Units Earned (Undergraduate level only)
15 (xii) National Service Training Program (NSTP) Certificate
16 (xiii) Reserve Officers' Training Corps (ROTC) Certificate
17 (xiv) Medium of Instruction Certificate
18 (xv) Certificate of Enrollment for Bar Examinees or Bar Takers
19

20 (c) Authentication, Verification, and International Documentation

- 21 (i) Certification, Authentication, and Verification (CAV) / Apostille /
22 former "Red Ribbon" certification
23 (ii) Certificates for foreign use (including Qatar, and similar jurisdictions)
24 (iii) Education verification forms required by foreign credentialing bodies
25 (including WES, AHPRA, NCLEX, COFNS, and similar entities)
26

27 (d) Academic Records and Transcripts

- 28 (i) Certified True Copy of Diploma
29 (ii) Certified True Copy of Transcript of Records (TOR)
30 (iii) Transcript of Records for any purpose, including employment,
31 licensure examinations, bar examinations, academic evaluation, or
32 study abroad applications
33 (iv) Report of Ratings or Copy of Grades
34

35 (e) Other Academic and Administrative Documents

- 36 (i) Course Description
37 (ii) Permit to Cross-Enroll
38 (iii) Transfer Credentials / Honorable Dismissal
39 (iv) Correction or amendment of name, date of birth, or place of birth
40 (v) Duplicate Diploma or academic records
41 (vi) Original Form 137 or equivalent school record
42 (vii) Translation of academic documents
43 (viii) Other analogous or similar academic records or certifications issued
44 by an Educational Institution
45

46 Provided, That the enumeration under this Section shall not be construed as
47 exclusive. All other analogous, similar, or related official school documents issued by

1 an Educational Institution, whether existing at the time of enactment or created
2 thereafter, shall likewise be covered under the exemption provided in this Act.

3
4 **SECTION 5. Coverage** - This Act shall apply to all Indigenous Cultural
5 Communities/Indigenous Peoples (ICCs/IPs) learners and graduates duly recognized
6 or certified in accordance with Republic Act No. 8371, otherwise known as the
7 Indigenous Peoples' Rights Act of 1997, who request or apply for the issuance,
8 authentication, certification, reproduction, or release of Official School Documents
9 from any Educational Institution in the Philippines, whether public or private, at any
10 level of education, including basic education, technical-vocational education, and
11 higher education.

12
13 **SECTION 6. Fee Exemption** - All Qualified Beneficiaries under this Act shall
14 be fully exempt from the payment of any and all fees, charges, costs, or monetary
15 considerations of whatever name or form, imposed or collected in connection with the
16 processing, issuance, authentication, certification, reproduction, verification, or
17 release of Official School Documents.

18
19 Such exemption shall include, but shall not be limited to, administrative fees,
20 processing fees, certification fees, documentary fees, system or platform charges,
21 convenience fees, and any similar or analogous charges that may be directly or
22 indirectly imposed by Educational Institutions.

23
24 No Educational Institution shall, directly or indirectly, require or collect any
25 payment from Qualified Beneficiaries for the procurement of Official School
26 Documents, whether such charges are imposed by the institution itself or by any office,
27 unit, contractor, or third-party service provider acting on its behalf.

28
29 Educational Institutions shall not refuse, delay, condition, or restrict the release
30 of Official School Documents on the basis of non-payment of any fee prohibited under
31 this Section.

32
33 **SECTION 7. Verification of Indigenous Peoples Status** - The status of a
34 Qualified Beneficiary as an Indigenous Cultural Community/Indigenous Peoples
35 (ICCs/IPs) member shall be verified through a certification, registry entry, or other
36 official documentation issued, recognized, or validated by the National Commission on
37 Indigenous Peoples (NCIP), pursuant to its mandate under Republic Act No. 8371,
38 otherwise known as the Indigenous Peoples' Rights Act of 1997.

39
40 Educational Institutions shall strictly rely on the certification or verification issued or
41 recognized by the NCIP and shall not require additional documentary requirements
42 beyond those prescribed by the NCIP for purposes of confirming Indigenous Peoples
43 membership, except for standard identity verification through government-issued
44 identification cards or other official identification documents.

45
46 No Educational Institution shall impose additional certification, clearance,
47 endorsement, or validation requirements from any local government unit, school

1 office, or other entity as a condition for the application or enjoyment of the exemption
2 granted under this Act.

3
4 **SECTION 8. Duties of Educational Institutions** - All Educational
5 Institutions shall:

6
7 (a) establish and maintain a standardized, accessible, and simplified procedure
8 for the receipt, processing, and release of Official School Documents for
9 Qualified Beneficiaries under this Act, which shall be made publicly available
10 through physical postings and official institutional websites, where applicable;
11

12 (b) process and release requests for Official School Documents within a fixed
13 period to be prescribed in the Implementing Rules and Regulations (IRR), which
14 shall in no case exceed ten (10) working days from receipt of a complete
15 application, unless a longer period is justified by force majeure or other
16 exceptional circumstances as defined in the IRR;
17

18 (c) designate a specific office, unit, or duly authorized officer responsible for
19 the implementation and compliance with this Act, including the receipt,
20 tracking, and release of requests, and the maintenance of records of all
21 applications processed under this Act;
22

23 (d) ensure that all requests covered under this Act are given priority processing
24 and are not subjected to additional internal delays, queues, or requirements
25 not provided under this Act or its IRR; and
26

27 (e) strictly refrain from imposing, directly or indirectly, any substitute fees,
28 processing fees, administrative charges, convenience fees, or any other form
29 of payment in relation to the issuance, authentication, certification, or release
30 of Official School Documents covered under this Act.
31

32 **SECTION 9. Government Support Mechanisms** - The State shall ensure
33 the effective implementation of this Act by providing appropriate financial,
34 administrative, and technical support mechanisms, including:
35

36 (a) the inclusion of necessary appropriations in the annual General
37 Appropriations Act (GAA) to support public Educational Institutions in the full
38 implementation of the fee exemptions mandated under this Act, including costs
39 associated with processing, issuance, authentication, and release of Official
40 School Documents for Qualified Beneficiaries;
41

42 (b) the establishment of a subsidy or reimbursement mechanism for private
43 Educational Institutions to offset the foregone fees resulting from compliance
44 with this Act, subject to guidelines to be jointly issued by the Department of
45 Education (DepEd), Commission on Higher Education (CHED), and Technical
46 Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA), in coordination with the
47 Department of Budget and Management (DBM); and
48

(c) the development of an administrative support framework, as may be necessary, to ensure uniform implementation across all Educational Institutions, including standardized reporting, monitoring, and reimbursement procedures, to be defined in the Implementing Rules and Regulations.

SECTION 10. Implementing Agencies - The following agencies shall implement, coordinate, and oversee the enforcement of this Act:

(a) The Department of Education (DepEd), Commission on Higher Education (CHED), and Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA) shall exercise jurisdiction over all public and private educational institutions under their respective mandates and shall ensure compliance with the provisions of this Act within their covered sectors, including monitoring of fee exemption implementation and document release procedures;

(b) The National Commission on Indigenous Peoples (NCIP) shall be responsible for the issuance, validation, and recognition of certification or documentation establishing Indigenous Peoples status, and shall assist in the verification standards necessary for the implementation of this Act;

(c) The Department of Education (DepEd), CHED, TESDA, and NCIP shall jointly develop harmonized guidelines, monitoring mechanisms, and reporting systems to ensure uniform implementation of this Act across all educational levels and institutions;

(d) The Department of Education (DepEd) shall act as the lead coordinating agency for basic education institutions, while CHED shall act as lead coordinating agency for higher education institutions, and TESDA for technical-vocational institutions, without prejudice to the overarching role of the NCIP in matters relating to Indigenous Peoples certification and verification;

(e) All implementing agencies shall coordinate with each other and may enter into inter-agency agreements, subject to existing laws, rules, and regulations, to ensure effective, efficient, and consistent implementation of this Act nationwide.

SECTION 11. Prohibited Acts - It shall be unlawful for any Educational Institution, or any of its officials, employees, agents, or representatives, to commit any of the following acts:

(a) refuse, deny, or fail to issue, release, or provide Official School Documents to a duly certified Qualified Beneficiary on the ground of non-payment of any fee or charge prohibited under this Act;

(b) impose, demand, collect, or receive, directly or indirectly, any fee, charge, cost, or consideration in violation of the provisions of this Act;

(c) delay, withhold, suspend, or unreasonably defer the processing or release of Official School Documents beyond the period prescribed under this Act or its Implementing Rules and Regulations, without valid and documented justification as defined therein;

(d) impose additional documentary requirements, certifications, clearances, endorsements, or procedures not required or authorized under this Act or its Implementing Rules and Regulations;

(e) condition the release of Official School Documents on the completion of any internal requirement, clearance, or obligation unrelated to the purpose of the request under this Act; and

(f) engage in any act, scheme, or practice intended to circumvent, frustrate, or undermine the rights granted to Qualified Beneficiaries under this Act.

SECTION 12. *Penalties* - Any Educational Institution, including its responsible officials, officers, employees, or agents, found to have violated any provision of this Act shall be subject to administrative, civil, and/or criminal liabilities as may be applicable under existing laws, without prejudice to the imposition of the following sanctions:

(a) Administrative Sanctions - The appropriate implementing agency, after due notice and hearing, may impose administrative fines, penalties, or other monetary sanctions, the amount and manner of which shall be determined under the Implementing Rules and Regulations, taking into account the gravity, nature, duration, and extent of the violation;

(b) Continuing Non-Compliance Penalties - In cases of continuing or repeated violations, the implementing agency may impose additional escalating sanctions, including daily penalties or equivalent measures, until full compliance is achieved;

(c) Suspension of Authority or Accreditation - In cases of serious, repeated, or willful violations, the Department of Education (DepEd), Commission on Higher Education (CHED), or Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA), as appropriate, may suspend the permit, recognition, accreditation, or authority to operate of the Educational Institution concerned, subject to due process;

(d) Revocation or Cancellation of Accreditation or Permit - In cases of gross, flagrant, or malicious violation, the appropriate regulatory agency may revoke or cancel the institution's recognition or authority to operate, subject to applicable laws and due process requirements;

(e) Liability of Responsible Officers - Officers, administrators, or personnel who knowingly authorize, participate in, or allow the commission of prohibited acts shall be subject to administrative sanctions, including suspension, dismissal, or

1 disqualification from holding any position in any Educational Institution, without
2 prejudice to other liabilities under existing laws;

3
4 (f) Other Remedies and Sanctions - The imposition of the foregoing penalties
5 shall be without prejudice to any civil, criminal, or other administrative liability
6 arising from existing laws, rules, and regulations.
7

8 **SECTION 18. Implementing Rules and Regulations.** - Within ninety (90)
9 days from the effectivity of this Act, the Department of Education (DepEd),
10 Commission on Higher Education (CHED), Technical Education and Skills Development
11 Authority (TESDA), and National Commission on Indigenous Peoples (NCIP), in
12 consultation with relevant stakeholders, shall jointly promulgate the necessary rules
13 and regulations for the effective implementation of this Act.
14

15 **SECTION 19. Separability Clause.** - If any provision of this Act is declared
16 unconstitutional or invalid, the remaining provisions not affected thereby shall remain
17 in full force and effect.
18

19 **SECTION 20. Repealing Clause.** - All laws, decrees, executive orders, rules
20 and regulations, ordinances, and other issuances or parts thereof inconsistent with
21 the provisions of this Act are hereby repealed, amended, or modified accordingly.
22

23 **SECTION 21. Effectivity.** - This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after
24 its publication in the Official Gazette or in a newspaper of general circulation.
25

26 **Approved,**