

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



TWENTIETH CONGRESS
Second Regular Session

HOUSE BILL NO. 10527

Introduced by **Representative Jaime R. Fresnedi**

EXPLANATORY NOTE

This bill seeks to institutionalize the provision of free basic, higher, and technical-vocational education in all jails and prisons throughout the country. By strengthening access to education for persons deprived of liberty (PDLs), the State reaffirms its constitutional commitment to ensure that proper education extends to all Filipinos, regardless of their circumstances.

The government has already demonstrated the transformative practice of prison education. In 2025, 10,739 PDLs completed elementary and secondary education through the Department of Education's (DepEd) Alternative Learning System (ALS). Beyond basic education, 107 PDLs have earned college degrees through the Tertiary Education Behind Bars Program implemented in partnership with the Commission on Higher Education (CHED). Moreover, 112,707 PDLs have completed training programs in carpentry, electronics, welding, arts and crafts, and small-scale entrepreneurship, in collaboration with Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA) and civil society partners. These initiatives have enabled many PDLs to acquire knowledge, skills, and qualifications that enhance their prospects for successful reintegration upon release.

Studies have consistently shown that low educational attainment is associated with limited economic opportunities, which may increase vulnerability to criminal behavior.¹ Likewise, the participation in prison education programs is associated with lower rates of recidivism², improving the likelihood that former PDLs will successfully reintegrate into society as productive and law-abiding citizens. The State must ensure that PDLs are afforded with education that plays a vital role in breaking the cycle of poverty and crime.

¹ Persival D. Cortez and Elizabeth C. Dioso, "Education Behind Bars: A Phenomenological Study", *International Journal of Advance Research and Innovative Ideas in Education* 9, no. 4 (2023), <https://ijariie.com/manuscript/21308>

² Maria Serrano, "Psychosocial Characteristics as Drivers of Crime Incidence and Quality of Life of Prison Inmates," *SMCC Higher Education Research Journal* 7 (2020), doi:10.18868/sherj7j.07.010120.10.

The rehabilitative value of prison education fosters moral renewal³. This is likewise supported by a 2026 study on the educational experiences of ALS learners in a Philippine prison. Researcher Carmelo Hubain identified redemption, reformation, and reintegration as the three defining dimensions of prison education. The findings demonstrate that education within correctional facilities goes beyond academic instruction – it serves as a pathway for a deeply humanizing opportunity that restores dignity and empowers PDLs to reshape their identities and lived realities.

This measure builds upon these gains by institutionalizing a comprehensive educational system for PDLs in correctional facilities nationwide. It establishes a PDL Education Committee tasked with formulating policies, setting standards, and overseeing the effective implementation of the educational system. Through a coordinated and institutionalized approach involving all concerned agencies and correctional authorities, this measure seeks to ensure that every PDL is afforded a genuine opportunity for personal growth, rehabilitation, and successful reintegration into society through education.

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


JAIME R. TRESNEDI
Representative
Lone District, Muntinlupa City

³ Emelyn R. Villanueva, et al., “*Transformative Learning Behind Bars: A Jail-Based Framework for Moral Recovery and Development*”, 25 International Journal of Learning, Teaching and Educational Research No. 1, (Jan. 2026).

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AN ACT
CREATING AN ALTERNATIVE EDUCATION SYSTEM FOR BASIC, HIGHER, AND TECHNICAL EDUCATION IN ALL CORRECTIONAL FACILITIES AND DETENTION CENTERS, PROVIDING FUNDS THEREFOR, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES

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

SECTION 1. *Short Title.* – This Act shall be referred to as the “*Liberty through Education Act*”.

SEC. 2. *Declaration of Policy.* – It is the policy of the State to equip all persons deprived of liberty (PDLs) with the necessary tools to reintegrate into society and reduce the chances of recidivism for those that have been found guilty of committing crimes. Educational attainment is a basic civil right which cultivates productive and responsible citizens, and the lack of access to which has been found to correlate with the commission of crimes and recidivism. To this end, the State shall afford all PDLs with access to basic, higher, and technical education.

SEC. 3. *Definition of Terms.* – For purposes of this Act, the following terms shall be defined as follows:

- (a) *Alternative Learning System* refers to the program of the Department of Education (DepEd) which provides access to basic education to individuals who have not undergone the formal education system, without need to attend regular classes;
- (b) *Correctional Facilities* refer to prisons managed by the Bureau of Corrections (BuCor);
- (c) *Custodial Institution* refers to both correctional facilities and detention centers;
- (d) *Detention Centers* refer to jails and detention centers managed by the Bureau of Jail Management and Penology (BJMP), as well as provincial and sub-provincial jails managed by their respective provincial governments;
- (e) *Higher Education* refers to degree programs offered by higher education institutions (HEIs) accredited by the Commission on Higher Education (CHED);

- (f) *Higher Education Institutions* refer to institutions accredited by CHED that offer degree programs;
- (g) *Inmates* refer to PDLs who are incarcerated in correctional facilities due to conviction for a criminal offense or detained in detention centers while undergoing or awaiting trial, as well as those serving short sentences;
- (h) *State Universities and Colleges (SUCs)* refer to HEIs owned by the national government and local government units;
- (i) *Technical Education* refers to vocational and technical courses offered by technical and vocational institutions (TVIs) accredited by the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA); and
- (j) *Technical and Vocational Institutions (TVIs)* refer to institutions accredited by TESDA that offer technical education courses.

SEC. 4. *Creation of an Educational System for PDLs.* – The DepEd, CHED, TESDA, BuCor, BJMP, and provincial governments shall establish a system of free basic, higher, and technical education for all inmates in all custodial institutions in the country.

SEC. 5. *PDL Education Committee.* – A PDL Education Committee shall be established, consisting of representatives of at least Assistant Secretary or equivalent rank from the following agencies:

- (a) DepEd, as Chair;
- (b) BJMP, as Vice-Chair;
- (c) CHED;
- (d) TESDA;
- (e) The Department of Interior and Local Government (DILG), to represent provincial governments; and
- (f) BuCor.

The Committee may also invite representatives from HEIs and TVIs in their meetings.

SEC. 6. *Duties and Responsibilities of the PDL Education Committee.* – The Committee shall have the following duties and responsibilities:

- (a) Establishment of guidelines for the implementation of this Act;
- (b) Creation of standards for security of all teaching personnel and staff from participating agencies and institutions, inmates, and other involved personnel

while delivering effective and quality education;

- (c) Determination of degree programs and courses to be offered at various custodial institutions in accordance with provisions of Section 8 of this Act;
- (d) Formulation and implementation of policies and programs for the integration of existing educational programs for inmates as provided for by Section 12 of this Act
- (e) Formulation and implementation of policies and programs for continuing education as provided for by Section 13 of this Act; and
- (f) Any other tasks that may be necessary to accomplish the objectives of this Act.

SEC. 7. Alternative Learning System (ALS). – The DepEd shall, in coordination with the BuCor, BJMP, and provincial governments, establish ALS facilities in all custodial institutions. This shall be made available to all qualified and willing inmates. The facilities shall include the assignment of teachers, with all facilities established to ensure the safety and welfare of inmates, teachers, and officials while ensuring the effective delivery of the education curriculum approved by the DepEd.

SEC. 8. Higher and Technical Education. – The CHED and TESDA shall, in coordination with the BuCor, BJMP, provincial governments, HEIs, and TVIs, establish programs for higher and technical education in custodial institutions which shall be made available for all qualified and willing inmates. The degrees and courses offered shall be determined based on the available demand for workers, the needs and interests of inmates, and the ability of the custodial institutions to provide effective training while maintaining the interests of security.

SEC. 9. Participation of HEIs and TVIs. – It shall be mandatory for SUCs and government-owned TVIs located in the vicinity of custodial institutions to participate in the program, subject to the guidelines developed by the PDL Education Committee.

SEC. 10. Participation of Privately-Owned Schools. – Privately-owned schools, HEIs, and TVIs may participate in the program: *Provided*, That the expenses for their participation shall be borne solely by the institutions offering assistance, subject to relevant laws on donations: *Provided, further*, That their participation has been approved by the PDL Education Committee: *Provided, furthermore*, That their participation shall be governed by the same guidelines as those for SUCs concerning the degree programs or courses offered and their implementation: *Provided, finally*, That all privately-owned schools, HEIs and TVIs participating in the program shall ensure that they are institutions in good standing with their respective accrediting government agency.

SEC. 11. *Participation of Non-Governmental Organizations.* – Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) who wish to participate in the program must be approved by the PDL Education Committee, subject to the following conditions:

- (a) All personnel and staff involved are duly licensed and accredited for the functions they are given;
- (b) The NGOs shall not receive any compensation from the government for their participation;
- (c) All costs incurred as part of their participation in the program shall be borne by the NGOs; and
- (d) The NGOs shall be assigned to custodial institutions based on the needs assessment of the PDL Education Committee.

SEC. 12. *Integration of Existing Inmate Education Programs.* – The PDL Education Committee shall determine the necessary guidelines for crediting units or hours already obtained by inmates from existing education programs. All personnel from the BuCor, BJMP, and provincial governments that participate in these existing programs shall be integrated into the system created by this Act, in accordance with the guidelines to be issued by the PDL Education Committee: *Provided*, That the personnel should be duly accredited or licensed for the functions assigned to them.

SEC. 13. *Continuing Education.* – All hours and credits earned by inmates under this Act shall be transferrable to all basic, higher, and technical education institutions both publicly and privately-owned, subject to relevant laws and the policies and standards set by these institutions for admission and retention.

SEC. 14. *Credits or Allowance for Good Behavior.* – Participation in the PDL education program established under this Act shall entitle the inmates to credits and allowance for good behavior, subject to relevant laws.

SEC. 15. *Implementing Rules and Regulations.* – The DepEd, in cooperation and consultation with relevant government agencies, shall promulgate the rules and regulations for the proper implementation of this Act within ninety (90) days from the effectivity of this Act.

SEC. 16. *Appropriations.* – The amount necessary for the initial implementation of this Act shall be charged against the current year's appropriations of the departments and agencies concerned. Thereafter, such amount shall be included in the annual General Appropriations Act.

SEC. 17. *Separability Clause.* – If any provision of this Act shall be deemed unconstitutional or invalid, the other provisions not affected there shall remain in force and effect.

SEC. 18. *Repealing Clause.* – All Acts, Presidential Decrees, Executive Orders and Administrative Orders, Rules and Regulations and other such issuances or parts thereof which are inconsistent with the provisions of this Act are hereby repealed or modified accordingly.

SEC. 19. *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,