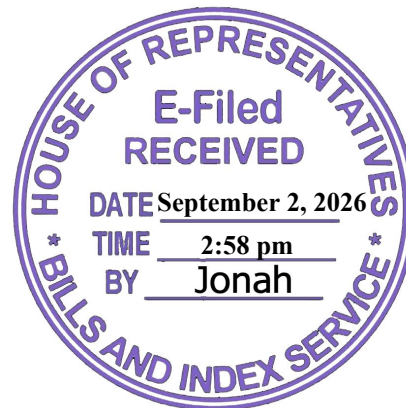




Republic of the Philippines
House of Representatives
Quezon City, Metro Manila

Twentieth Congress
Second Regular Session

HOUSE BILL NO. 11075



Introduced by Representatives Ferdinand Martin G. Romualdez, Yedda Marie K. Romualdez, Andrew Julian K. Romualdez and Jude A. Acidre

AN ACT
MANDATING FREE COLLEGE ENTRANCE EXAMINATIONS IN STATE UNIVERSITIES AND COLLEGES AND LOCAL UNIVERSITIES AND COLLEGES, PROHIBITING DISCRIMINATION BASED ON INABILITY TO PAY TESTING FEES, AND PROVIDING FUNDS THEREFOR

EXPLANATORY NOTE

Access to higher education begins with access to college admission. However, for many Filipino students, especially those from low-income households, entrance examination fees remain a significant barrier to opportunity.

While RA No. 12006 otherwise known as the ‘Free College Entrance Examinations Act’ has provided relief by mandating private higher education institutions to waive entrance examination fees for qualified students, its coverage remains limited. The law applies only to private institutions and imposes eligibility conditions, thereby excluding many deserving students who may not meet specific academic or income thresholds. Moreover, there is currently no uniform national policy mandating all State Universities and Colleges (SUCs) and Local Universities and Colleges (LUCs) to provide free entrance examinations, nor is there an explicit prohibition against exclusion due to inability to pay testing fees.

This bill seeks to institutionalize a universal, rights-based approach by mandating all SUCs and LUCs to provide free entrance examinations to all applicants, regardless of socioeconomic status, and to prohibit any form of exclusion or discrimination based on inability to pay.

By removing financial barriers at the point of entry, the State ensures that access to higher education is determined by merit and potential, not by financial capacity.

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



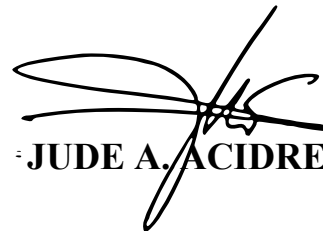
FERDINAND MARTIN G. ROMUALDEZ



YEDDA MARIE K. ROMUALDEZ



ANDREW JULIAN K. ROMUALDEZ



JUDE A. ACIDRE



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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 “*Free Public College Entrance Examination Act.*”

SECTION 2. *Declaration of Policy.* – It is hereby declared the policy of the State to protect and promote the right of all citizens to quality education at all levels and to ensure equitable access to higher education opportunities.

The State shall remove financial barriers that hinder access to college admission, particularly for students from disadvantaged backgrounds, and shall guarantee that no qualified applicant is denied the opportunity to apply for admission to public higher education institutions due to inability to pay entrance examination fees. Towards this end, the State shall institutionalize free, accessible, and non-discriminatory admission processes in all State Universities and Colleges (SUCs) and Local Universities and Colleges (LUCs), consistent with the principles of equity, inclusivity, and social justice.

SECTION 3. *Coverage.* – This Act shall apply to all State Universities and Colleges (SUCs) and Local Universities and Colleges (LUCs), including their campuses, extension programs, and satellite institutions.

SECTION 4. *Free Entrance Examination.* -- All covered institutions shall provide free college entrance examinations and admission-related testing services to all applicants. No fees, charges, or any form of payment shall be imposed for the administration of entrance examinations, application processing, or related admission procedures.

SECTION 5. *Prohibition Against Discrimination* – No applicant shall be denied access to college entrance examinations or admission processes on the basis of inability or refusal to pay any fee. Any policy, practice, or requirement that directly or indirectly conditions admission on the capacity to pay examination or application fees is hereby prohibited.

SECTION 6. *Standardization of Admission Fee Policies.* – The Commission on Higher Education (CHED), in coordination with State Universities and Colleges (SUCs), Local Universities and Colleges (LUCs), and other relevant stakeholders, shall formulate, adopt, and enforce uniform standards and guidelines to ensure full and consistent compliance with this Act.

Such standards shall include, but shall not be limited to:

- (a) The absolute prohibition of any form of entrance examination fees, application fees, processing fees, or other direct or indirect charges related to admission, including so-called “facilitation,” “reservation,” or “system access” fees;
- (b) The prohibition of hidden, embedded, or disguised charges that effectively circumvent the intent of this Act;
- (c) The mandatory and transparent disclosure of all admission requirements, procedures, timelines, and evaluation criteria in a clear, accessible, and non-discriminatory manner, including publication through official websites and public notice systems;
- (d) The establishment of accessible, efficient, and secure application systems, including both digital and in-person modalities, to ensure that applicants from all socioeconomic backgrounds are able to apply without undue burden;
- (e) The adoption of user-friendly, inclusive, and disability-accessible platforms in accordance with applicable accessibility standards;
- (f) The provision of grievance and redress mechanisms for applicants who may encounter violations or barriers in the admission process.

CHED shall regularly review and update these guidelines to ensure responsiveness to evolving educational and technological conditions.

SECTION 7. *Funding Support* – The national government shall provide financial support to SUCs to cover the cost of administering entrance examinations, including personnel, materials, and digital systems. Local Government Units shall allocate funds for LUCs under their jurisdiction to ensure compliance with this Act.

SECTION 8. *Inclusion Mechanisms*. — To ensure equitable access to college entrance examinations and admission processes, all covered institutions shall implement inclusive and accessibility-focused measures.

Such measures shall include, but shall not be limited to:

- (a) The provision of alternative testing arrangements for applicants residing in geographically isolated and disadvantaged areas, including mobile testing centers, community-based testing venues, or coordinated testing through partner institutions;
- (b) The establishment of online, remote, or decentralized testing systems, where feasible, while ensuring the integrity, security, and fairness of the examination process;
- (c) The provision of reasonable accommodations for applicants with disabilities, consistent with accessibility and inclusive education standards;
- (d) The conduct of proactive information dissemination and outreach programs in coordination with public secondary schools, community

organizations, and local government units to ensure that all eligible students are informed of their rights and opportunities under this Act;

(e) The provision of assistance mechanisms, including help desks and application support services, for first-time applicants and those with limited access to technology.

CHED shall issue detailed guidelines to operationalize these inclusion mechanisms.

SECTION 9: *Monitoring and Compliance.* – The Commission on Higher Education (CHED) shall serve as the primary oversight and monitoring body for the implementation of this Act and shall establish a comprehensive monitoring, evaluation, and compliance framework.

CHED shall develop a standardized reporting system requiring all SUCs and LUCs to submit annual reports, which shall include, but not be limited to:

- (a) The total number of applicants and examinees disaggregated by region, gender, and other relevant indicators;
- (b) The cost of administering entrance examinations and admission processes;
- (c) The measures undertaken to ensure compliance with the provisions of this Act;
- (d) The implementation of inclusion and accessibility mechanisms; and
- (e) Any challenges encountered and recommendations for improvement.

CHED shall conduct periodic audits, inspections, and validation activities to verify compliance and may require additional reports or documentation as necessary. An annual consolidated report on the implementation of this Act shall be submitted by CHED to Congress and made publicly accessible.

SECTION 10. *Penalties.* — Any official or institution found to be in violation of this Act shall be subject to administrative sanctions, including fines, suspension of authority to collect fees, or other penalties as may be determined by CHED, without prejudice to other applicable laws.

SECTION 11. *Relationship with Existing Laws.* — This Act shall complement and strengthen the Free College Entrance Examinations Act (Republic Act No. 12006) by expanding access to public higher education institutions and ensuring universal application regardless of socioeconomic status.

SECTION 12. *Implementing Rules and Regulations (IRR).* — Within sixty (60) days from the effectivity of this Act, CHED, in coordination with relevant agencies, shall promulgate the necessary rules and regulations.

SECTION 13. *Separability Clause.* — If any provision of this Act is declared unconstitutional, the remaining provisions shall remain in full force and effect.

SECTION 14. *Repealing Clause* — All laws, decrees, and regulations inconsistent with this Act are hereby repealed or modified accordingly.

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

Approved,