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Introduced by Representative ANTOLIN “LENLEN” A. ORETA III

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AN ACT

**INSTITUTIONALIZING THE RECOGNITION, QUALITY ASSURANCE, STACKABILITY, AND PORTABILITY OF MICROCREDENTIALS AND SHORT COURSES, STRENGTHENING WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT, PROVIDING FLEXIBLE LEARNING PATHWAYS AND PROTECTIONS FOR LEARNERS, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES**

**EXPLANATORY NOTE**

The Philippines continues to face a growing mismatch between the skills possessed by its workforce and those required by a rapidly changing economy. The Second Congressional Commission on Education (EDCOM II), in its Year Two Report, found that skills mismatches persist across all levels of education. Around one-third of employed Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) graduates are working in positions that do not fully utilize their qualifications, while senior high school graduates record the highest unemployment rate among educational cohorts. Moreover, from 2021 to 2022, approximately 35% of the labor force was engaged in the informal sector, many of whom have limited access to portable and recognized credentials that can be readily accepted by employers, educational institutions, and government programs.

Despite these challenges, the country still lacks a unified legal framework governing microcredentials and short courses. The Philippine Qualifications Framework (PQF), established under Executive Order No. 83 in 2012 and institutionalized through Republic Act No. 10968 in 2018, was intended to provide a national system for recognizing and building upon qualifications acquired through various learning pathways. However, EDCOM II reported that little substantial progress has been made in implementing the PQF since its establishment. The National Coordinating Council became nonfunctional in 2017 due to staffing and funding limitations, while the framework continued to lack a permanent secretariat, coordinated financing, and a comprehensive strategic plan at the time of the Year Two Report.

As a result, skills and competencies gained through short courses, workplace-based training, and other forms of non-formal learning remain difficult to recognize, accumulate toward higher qualifications, or transfer across employers and educational institutions. EDCOM II likewise identified the lack of a clear national framework for the equivalency and recognition of non-formal and informal learning as a major barrier to lifelong learning and workforce development. Workers who acquire new skills through industry training, online learning platforms, or community-based learning programs often have no reliable mechanism through which these competencies can be converted into academic credit or formal certification.

This proposed measure seeks to address these gaps by formally integrating microcredentials and short courses into the Philippine education and training system and aligning them with the PQF. It establishes minimum quality standards and requires the accreditation of qualified providers by the Commission on Higher Education (CHED), the Technical Education and Skills Development

Authority (TESDA), and the Department of Education (DepEd). It also provides for the creation of a Digital Credential Registry to facilitate the verification, portability, and interoperability of credentials.

The proposed measure further safeguards learner rights, provides protections for employed individuals pursuing additional education or training, and institutionalizes access to Recognition of Prior Learning. An Inter-Agency Coordination Committee composed of CHED, TESDA, DepEd, and the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) will be established to harmonize national standards. Its work will be complemented by an Industry Advisory Council and mechanisms for scholarships, training vouchers, and employer tax incentives. Through these reforms, the measure seeks to establish a unified and coherent national system for flexible learning that recognizes diverse forms of education and training and enables Filipinos to acquire, build upon, and carry their skills throughout their education and careers.

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



**ANTOLIN “LENLEN” A. ORETA III**  
*Lone District of Malabon City*

Republic of the Philippines  
**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**  
Quezon City

**TWENTIETH CONGRESS**  
Second Regular Session

**HOUSE BILL NO. 11184**

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Introduced by Representative ANTOLIN “LENLEN” A. ORETA III

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**AN ACT**  
**INSTITUTIONALIZING THE RECOGNITION, QUALITY ASSURANCE,**  
**STACKABILITY, AND PORTABILITY OF MICROCREDENTIALS AND SHORT**  
**COURSES, STRENGTHENING WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT, PROVIDING**  
**FLEXIBLE LEARNING PATHWAYS AND PROTECTIONS FOR LEARNERS, AND FOR**  
**OTHER PURPOSES**

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

- 1        **Section 1. *Short Title.*** - This Act shall be known as the "Abot-Kayang Pangarap Act."
- 2        **Sec. 2. *Declaration of Policy.*** - It is the policy of the State to promote response to  
3 technological change and evolving labor market demands.
- 4        Toward this end, the State shall recognize microcredentials and short courses as legitimate  
5 and integral parts of the national education and training system; ensure their quality, stackability,  
6 and portability within the Philippine Qualifications Framework; and align them with national  
7 workforce development strategies, so that learning and skills development remain accessible to all  
8 Filipinos at every stage of life and career.
- 9        **Sec. 3. *Definition of Terms.*** - As used in this Act:
- 10        (a) ***Accredited Provider*** refers to an institution, organization, or entity duly authorized by the  
11 Commission on Higher Education (CHED), the Technical Education and Skills  
12 Development Authority (TESDA), or the Department of Education (DepEd) to offer  
13 microcredentials or short courses under this Act;
- 14        (b) ***Credit Equivalency*** refers to the conversion of demonstrated learning outcomes into  
15 academic or training credits;
- 16        (c) ***Employed Student*** refers to a learner engaged in wage employment, self-employment,  
17 informal work, or livelihood activities while enrolled in a microcredential or short course;
- 18        (d) ***Learning Outcomes*** refer to measurable statements of what a learner is expected to know  
19 and demonstrate upon completing a microcredential or short course, which serve as the basis  
20 for curriculum design, assessment, and quality assurance under this Act;
- 21        (e) ***Microcredential*** refers to a competency-based certification attesting to specific, verified  
22 competencies acquired over a short duration, assessed against defined standards, and  
23 satisfying the minimum requirements under this Act;
- 24        (f) ***Portability*** refers to the recognition and transferability of microcredentials across  
25 institutions, sectors, employers, and jurisdictions;

(g) **Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)** refers to the formal assessment and recognition of competencies acquired through formal, non-formal, or informal learning, including work experience;

(h) **Short Course** refers to a structured learning program of limited duration, which may be modular, stackable, or standalone, delivered through any mode; and

(i) **Stackability** refers to the accumulation and sequencing of microcredentials or short courses toward academic credit, diplomas, degrees, or national qualifications.

**Sec. 4. Legal Recognition.** - Microcredentials and short courses are recognized as lawful and integral parts of the Philippine education and training system. They shall complement, and not replace, formal degree and diploma programs, and shall serve as flexible entry, exit, or progression pathways for all learners.

No educational institution, employer, or government agency shall refuse to consider a duly accredited microcredential solely because of its delivery mode or duration, subject to compliance with quality assurance standards under this Act.

**Sec. 5. Alignment with the Philippine Qualifications Framework.** - All microcredentials and short courses accredited under this Act shall, where appropriate, be referenced to the Philippine Qualifications Framework (PQF) to facilitate recognition, stackability, and progression within the national education and training system. CHED, TESDA, and DepEd shall, in coordination with the PQF National Coordinating Council, promulgate joint guidelines for the referencing of microcredentials and short courses to the appropriate PQF levels within their respective sectors.

Stackable credentials shall be designed to enable coherent progression across PQF levels toward higher qualifications, consistent with applicable education and training standards.

**Sec. 6. Minimum Standards for Microcredentials.** - No credential shall be issued or recognized as a microcredential under this Act unless it satisfies all of the following minimum requirements:

(a) At least fifteen (15) notional learning hours;

(b) Clearly defined and measurable learning outcomes aligned with recognized competency or academic standards;

(c) Assessment conducted by a qualified assessor;

(d) Issuance by an accredited provider; and

(e) Registration in the Digital Credential Registry established under Section 14 of this Act.

CHED, TESDA, and DepEd may prescribe higher sector-specific standards within their respective mandates. The Inter-Agency Coordination Committee, established under Section 19 of this Act, shall periodically review these minimum standards at least once every three (3) years.

**Sec. 7. Quality Assurance and Provider Accreditation.** - CHED, TESDA, and DepEd shall each establish and enforce quality assurance standards for microcredentials and short courses within their respective mandates, covering provider accreditation, learning outcomes, assessment, instructional design, and learner support. They shall harmonize these standards through the Inter-Agency Coordination Committee to ensure comparability across sectors.

No person or entity shall offer microcredentials or short courses under this Act without prior accreditation from the appropriate agency. Each agency shall maintain a publicly accessible registry of accredited providers, updated at least annually. Accreditation shall be subject to periodic renewal and performance review.

**Sec. 8. Stackability, Portability, and Credit Recognition.** - Accredited microcredentials and short courses may be credited toward formal education programs and national qualifications, subject

to rules issued by CHED and TESDA within their respective jurisdictions. Higher education institutions shall publish clear policies on credit conversion, accumulation limits, and validity periods.

CHED shall promulgate rules on the credit equivalency and academic recognition of microcredentials toward undergraduate and graduate degrees. No institution shall impose credit transfer requirements more restrictive than CHED standards without written justification on academic grounds.

No learner shall be required to repeat learning already demonstrated through an accredited microcredential or recognized prior learning, except where required by licensure, public safety, or substantial academic grounds, which must be disclosed in writing upon the learner's request.

**Sec. 9. Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL).** - CHED and TESDA shall each establish, within their respective jurisdictions, a framework for the Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL), consistent with Republic Act No. 12313, otherwise known as the Lifelong Learning Development Framework (LLDF) Act. Such framework shall provide for the assessment and recognition of competencies acquired through formal, non-formal, or informal learning, including industry-based and work-based learning.

Industry-recognized credentials may be considered for academic or training credit only upon evaluation in accordance with standards prescribed by the appropriate agency. Industry recognition alone shall not confer academic or training credit.

**Sec. 10. Industry Participation.** - An Industry Advisory Council, composed of representatives from relevant industries, employer organizations, professional associations, and worker groups, shall be constituted under the Inter-Agency Coordination Committee to:

- (a) Identify skills needs and labor market gaps;
- (b) Co-design and validate competency standards; and
- (c) Recommend updates to the quality assurance framework.

The Council shall serve in an advisory capacity only. Authority over accreditation and academic matters shall remain with CHED, TESDA, and DepEd. Government reskilling and employment programs shall recognize accredited microcredentials as valid training credentials.

**Sec. 11. Learner Rights and Duties of Institutions.** - All learners enrolled in accredited microcredentials or short courses have the right to transparent information on credit conversion policies, stackability pathways, RPL procedures, and assessment requirements prior to enrollment. Institutions and accredited providers shall make this information publicly accessible.

Institutions shall adopt flexible, learner-centered delivery policies, including blended or asynchronous options where applicable, advance notice of assessments, and access to academic advising, without compromising academic standards or credential integrity.

**Sec. 12. Protections for Employed Students.** - Employed students enrolled in accredited microcredentials or short courses shall not be denied enrollment, continuation, or completion solely by reason of employment status or work schedule, provided academic requirements are met. They shall be entitled to reasonable academic accommodations, including flexible pacing and alternative assessment modes consistent with program standards.

Employers are encouraged to support employed students through flexible work arrangements, adjusted schedules, or educational leave, subject to operational requirements and management prerogative exercised in good faith and consistent with the Labor Code of the Philippines.

No employer shall dismiss, demote, or otherwise prejudice an employed student solely by reason of enrollment in an accredited program, absent willful neglect of employment duties or

violation of a lawful company policy. Violations may be brought before the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE), without prejudice to remedies available under existing laws. Nothing in this section shall be construed to diminish existing labor rights, employer prerogatives, or collective bargaining agreements.

**Sec. 13. *Complaints and Redress.*** - Complaints involving educational institutions or accredited providers under this Act shall be filed with CHED or TESDA, as appropriate. Complaints involving employers shall be filed with DOLE, without prejudice to remedies available under existing laws.

No filing fee shall be required for complaints filed under this Act. No person shall be subjected to retaliation, intimidation, or adverse action for filing a complaint or participating in any proceeding under this Act.

**Sec. 14. *Digital Credential Registry.*** - A centralized, secure, and interoperable Digital Credential Registry is hereby established, administered by CHED in coordination with TESDA, DepEd, and DOLE. The Registry shall serve as the national repository of all accredited microcredentials and short courses issued under this Act, including learner completion records, provider accreditation data, and credential verification information. Only credentials recorded in the Registry shall be recognized for academic credit, employment, promotion, or workforce certification : under this Act.

The Registry shall be interoperable with existing national data systems and shall comply with the Data Privacy Act of 2012.

**Sec. 15. *Transition of Existing Credentials.*** - Microcredentials and short courses issued before the effectivity of this Act may be recognized under this framework if, within two (2) years from effectivity, the issuing provider obtains accreditation and the credential meets the minimum standards under Section 6 and is registered in the Digital Credential Registry. Credentials that do not qualify within this period shall not be recognized under this Act but remain valid under any other law or agreement under which they were issued.

**Sec. 16. *Incentives and Financial Assistance.*** - The State may provide scholarships, training vouchers, grants, or subsidies to support participation in accredited microcredentials and short courses, with priority for learners from disadvantaged sectors, workers in industries undergoing technological disruption, and those seeking to re-enter the workforce. Employers supporting employee upskilling through accredited programs may be eligible for tax incentives under applicable fiscal laws, including the National Internal Revenue Code and the CREATE Act.

**Sec. 17. *Credential Fraud.*** - Any person who knowingly issues, submits, or uses a fraudulent or unregistered credential as an accredited microcredential or short course under this Act shall be liable under the Revised Penal Code and other applicable laws. Accredited providers found to have knowingly issued, facilitated, or tolerated fraudulent credentials shall be subject to administrative sanctions under this Act, including suspension or revocation of accreditation, without prejudice to criminal or civil liability under existing laws.

**Sec. 18. *Regulatory Sanctions.*** - CHED, TESDA, and DepEd may, after due notice and opportunity to be heard, impose the following sanctions on accredited providers for violations of this Act:

- (a) Written warning with directed corrective action;
- (b) Suspension of accreditation;
- (c) Revocation of accreditation; and
- (d) Disqualification from re-applying for a period not exceeding five (5) years.

**Sec. 19. *Inter-Agency Coordination Committee.*** - There is hereby created an Inter-Agency Coordination Committee composed of CHED as lead agency, TESDA, DepEd, and DOLE. The Committee shall:

- (a) Harmonize quality assurance standards, accreditation procedures, and credit equivalency rules across agencies;
- (b) Oversee the Digital Credential Registry;
- (c) Convene and oversee the Industry Advisory Council;
- (d) Issue joint guidelines as necessary for the implementation of this Act; and
- (e) Review the minimum standards and quality assurance framework at least every three (3) years.

The Committee shall meet at least quarterly and submit an annual implementation report to the Senate and House of Representatives.

**Sec. 20. *Monitoring and Evaluation.*** - The Inter-Agency Coordination Committee shall track the outcomes of this Act, including but not limited to: enrollment and completion rates disaggregated by sector, gender, and region; employment outcomes of completers; credit equivalency and RPL decisions; and complaint and sanction statistics.

**Sec. 21. *Appropriations.*** - The funds necessary to implement this Act shall initially be charged against the current appropriations of CHED, TESDA, DepEd, and DOLE. Thereafter, the necessary amounts shall be included in the annual General Appropriations Act.

**Sec. 22. *Implementing Rules and Regulations.*** - CHED, TESDA, DepEd,

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205           **Sec. 22. Implementing Rules and Regulations.** - CHED, TESDA, DepEd, and DOLE shall  
206 jointly promulgate the Implementing Rules and Regulations within ninety (90) days from the  
207 effectivity of this Act.

208           **Sec. 23. Separability Clause.** - If any portion or provision of this Act is declared  
209 unconstitutional, the remainder of this Act and any provisions not affected thereby shall remain in  
210 force and effect.

211           **Sec. 24. Repealing Clause.** - Any law, presidential decree, or issuance of an executive order,  
212 letter of instruction, rule, or regulation inconsistent with the provisions of this Act is hereby repealed  
213 or modified accordingly.

214           **Sec. 25. Effectivity.** - This Act shall take effect after fifteen (15) days following its complete  
215 publication in the Official Gazette or a newspaper of general circulation.

216           *Approved,*