



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

TWENTIETH CONGRESS
First Regular Session

HOUSE BILL NO. 220



Introduced by Representative Crispin Diego “Ping” D. Remulla

AN ACT
EXEMPTING QUALIFIED INDIGENT FILIPINOS FROM PAYMENT OF
PROFESSIONAL EXAMINATION FEES AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES

EXPLANATORY NOTE

Republic Act No. 10931, also known as the Universal Access to Quality Tertiary Education Act, was enacted in 2017. This landmark law established free tuition and exemption from other fees in state universities and colleges, as well as in local universities and colleges, making quality higher education more accessible to Filipinos. It represents a significant milestone in the government’s continuing effort to make education a right rather than a privilege.

Despite this achievement, government support effectively ends once students graduate from tertiary education. Many indigent graduates face a new hurdle, which is shouldering the high costs of licensure examinations required to enter their respective professions. These expenses often prevent them from practicing the careers they worked hard to prepare for.

Recognizing the vital contributions of professionals to national development, the State must ensure that financial limitations do not prevent capable graduates from joining the workforce. Supporting them at this critical point is an investment in both their future and the progress of the nation. Thus, this proposed measure seeks to address that gap by exempting qualified underprivileged graduates from paying licensure examination fees.

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

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ping D. Remulla', written in a cursive style.

CRISPIN DIEGO "PING" D. REMULLA



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

1 **SECTION 1. *Short Title.*** This Act shall be known as the “*Free Professional*
2 *Examinations Act.*”

3 **SEC. 2. *Declaration of Policy.*** It is the declared policy of the State to promote full
4 employment and to provide equal opportunities for employment for **all**. It is likewise the policy
5 of the state to promote a just and dynamic social order that will free the people from poverty
6 through policies and programs that provide adequate social services and improve the quality of
7 life. In this regard, efforts should be initiated to ease the financial burden of aspiring
8 professionals in the payment of professional and examination fees.

9 **SEC. 3. *Definition of Terms.*** As provided for in this Act;

- 10 a. “*Professional Examinations*” shall refer to the licensure examinations administered
11 by the Professional Regulations Commission (PRC) and other certifying bodies of
12 the government as a prerequisite to the issuance of a license to engage in a
13 profession. This shall include the examinations administered by the Civil Service
14 Commission (CSC) to determine eligibility for employment in government service.
- 15 b. “*Qualified Indigent*” refers to a person who has no visible means of income or
16 support, or whose income is insufficient for the subsistence or basic needs of his or

1 her family, as may be determined by the Department of Social Welfare and
2 Development (DSWD).

3 **SEC. 4. *Requirements for Availment.*** For purposes of availing of the benefits of this
4 Act, an examinee shall secure a certification from the DSWD that said examinee is a qualified
5 indigent. Such certification shall be presented to the certifying body in lieu of the payment of
6 examination fees. Provided, that a first-time applicant may be entitled to a waiver of 100% of
7 the examination fees; Provided, further, that in the event the examinee needs to retake the
8 professional examination, he or she shall only be entitled to assistance equivalent to 50% for
9 the examination fee for the second take, and no other subsidy shall be given for succeeding
10 retakes.

11 No other fee shall be charged against the qualified indigent for the purposes of the
12 professional examination.

13 **SEC. 5. *Limitations on Availment.*** Benefits of this Act may be availed of only once
14 per year by a qualified indigent. Moreover, examinees who are already receiving similar
15 benefits under other laws and programs of the government shall not be entitled to the benefits
16 provided under these provisions. However, nothing contained herein shall diminish or decrease
17 the benefits received by beneficiaries under pertinent laws, rules, and regulations.

18 **SEC. 6. *Memorandum of Agreement.*** The DSWD shall enter into an appropriate
19 memorandum of agreement and coordinate with the certifying bodies for the proper
20 implementation of this Act.

21 **SEC. 7. *Interpretation in Favor of the Applicant.*** In all cases, any ambiguity in the
22 interpretation of the provisions of this Act shall be in favor of the applicant. No agency shall
23 issue unduly restrictive regulations which will render the benefits provided under this Act
24 nugatory.

25 **SEC. 8. *Reportorial Requirement.*** For purposes of determining the effectiveness of
26 this Act, an Inter-Agency Committee (Committee) is hereby created with the Secretary of the
27 DSWD as the Chairperson and the heads of the PRC, CSC, and other relevant agencies, the
28 participation of which is deemed necessary by the Committee. The Committee shall submit an
29 annual report to the appropriate committees of both Houses of Congress on the status of the
30 implementation of this Act. The Committee shall closely monitor the compliance of the
31 concerned government agencies and may recommend to the proper authorities the filing of an
32 administrative complaint against any person who refuses to comply with the provisions of this
33 Act.

1 **SEC. 9. *Pre-Examination Support Programs.*** – The DSWD, in coordination with
2 concerned agencies and accredited review centers, shall develop support programs such as free
3 or subsidized review classes, materials, and mock exams for qualified indigents.

4 **SEC. 10. *Information, Education, and Communication (IEC) Campaign.*** The
5 Committee, in cooperation with the Philippine Information Agency (PIA), is mandated to
6 conduct an annual IEC campaign to inform potential beneficiaries of the procedures and
7 guidelines in availing of the benefits of this Act. As far as practicable, the information
8 campaigns shall be made available in print, television, radio broadcast, and online platforms.

9 **SEC. 11. *Appropriations.*** An amount necessary for the initial implementation of this
10 Act shall be charged against the respective budgetary allocations of the concerned government
11 agencies, subject to the usual budgeting, accounting, and auditing rules and regulations.
12 Thereafter, an amount necessary for the proper implementation of this Act shall be included in
13 the annual General Appropriations Act.

14 **SEC. 12. *Implementing Rules and Regulations (IRR).*** Within ninety (90) days from
15 the date of effectivity of this Act, the DSWD, PRC, CSC, and the Supreme Court shall
16 formulate the necessary rules and regulations for the proper and effective implementation of
17 the provisions of this Act.

18 **SEC. 13. *Separability Clause.*** If any provision of this Act is declared unconstitutional
19 or invalid, the other provisions not affected by such declaration shall remain in full force and
20 effect.

21 **SEC. 14. *Repealing Clause.*** Any law, decree, ordinance, or administrative circular
22 inconsistent with any provision of this Act is hereby amended, repealed or modified
23 accordingly.

24 **SEC. 15. *Effectivity Clause.*** This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its
25 complete publication in the Official Gazette or in two (2) newspapers of general circulation.

Approved,