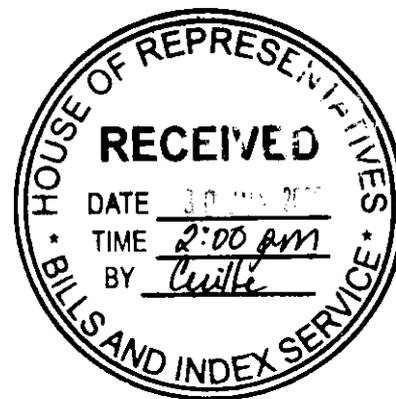


Republic of the Philippines
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Quezon City, Metro Manila

TWENTIETH CONGRESS
1st Regular Session

House Bill No. 453



Introduced by Representative OMAR S. DUTERTE

EXPLANATORY NOTE

Education remains one of the most valuable gifts that Filipino families can provide to the next generation. For many households, particularly those living in poverty or belonging to indigenous cultural communities, a child's graduation is not only a personal success but a shared victory that reflects years of sacrifice, resilience, and hope.

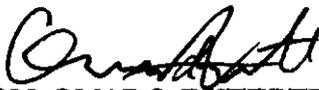
While the Philippine government has made significant strides in making education more accessible through state universities and scholarship programs, many hidden and continuing costs persist beyond graduation. Daily transportation, meals, school supplies, and most notably, the fees for professional licensure examinations place a heavy burden on financially struggling graduates. These challenges are even more pronounced for members of marginalized and geographically isolated communities.

Among the most costly post-graduation requirements are board examinations, which are necessary for professions such as teaching, engineering, nursing, among others. Thus, it becomes of bereft disappointment that licensure exams, which are designed to assess a graduate's competence and readiness to practice, are being sifted early by an examiner's ability to pay. For many indigent and Indigenous Peoples/Indigenous Cultural Communities (IP/ICC) graduates, the cost of taking these exams becomes a barrier to entering their chosen field, regardless of the arduous years of hard work and academic achievement.

This proposed measure seeks to institutionalize free licensure examinations for qualified indigent examinees, including members of Indigenous Peoples/Indigenous Cultural Communities (IP/ICC). It aims to ensure that financial limitations do not prevent deserving individuals from

becoming licensed professionals. By removing this barrier, the measure promotes equal opportunity, uplifts underrepresented sectors, and strengthens the country's human resource base.

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



HON. OMAR S. DUTERTE

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

TWENTIETH CONGRESS
1st Regular Session

House Bill No. 453

Introduced by Representative **OMAR S. DUTERTE**

AN ACT
PROVIDING FOR FREE PROFESSIONAL EXAMINATIONS TO QUALIFIED
INDIGENTS AND MEMBERS OF THE INDIGENOUS PEOPLES AND
INDIGENOUS CULTURAL COMMUNITIES (IP/ICCS)

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 Professional Examinations Act.*”

SEC 2. *Declaration of Policy.* – It is declared policy of the State to promote full employment and to provide equal opportunities for employment for all.

Corollary to this is the concomitant responsibility of the State to ensure that there are no inroads that may effectively hinder the professional growth of the citizens. Furthermore, it is the policy of the State to promote a just and dynamic social order that will free the people from poverty through policies and programs that provide adequate social services, and improve the quality of life for all. In this regard, efforts should be initiated so as to afford the poor access to mechanisms that may expand opportunities for better employment.

SEC 3. *Definition of Terms.* – As provided for in this Act:

- a. “**Professional Examinations**” shall refer to the licensure examinations conducted by the Professional Regulations Commission (PRC) leading to the issuance of a professional license. It shall also include examinations conducted by the Civil Service Commission (CSC) leading to eligibility for employment to the government as a civil service professional or sub professionals and the Bar Examinations conducted by the Supreme Court of the Philippines.
- b. “**Qualified Indigents**” refers to a person who has no visible means of income or support, or whose income may not be sufficient for the subsistence or basic needs of his family, as may be determined by the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD).
- c. “**Qualified Member of the Indigenous Peoples/Indigenous Cultural Communities**” refers to a member of the Indigenous Peoples/Indigenous Cultural

Communities, as may be verified by the National Commission on Indigenous Peoples (NCIP).

SEC 4. *Requirements for Availment.* – For purposes of availing of the benefits of this Act, an examinee shall secure a certification as a qualified indigent from the DSWD or certification as a member of the Indigenous Peoples/Indigenous Cultural Communities from the NCIP. Such certification shall be presented to the Professional Regulations Commission (PRC), the Civil Service Commission (CSC) or the Supreme Court of the Philippines, as the case may be, in lieu of the payment of examination fees.

No other fee shall be charged against the qualified indigent or member of the IP/ICCs for purposes of the professional examination.

SEC 5. *Limitations on Availment.* – Benefits of this Act may be availed of by a qualified indigent or member of the IP/ICCs only once for every year.

SEC 6. *Information, Education and Communication (IEC) Campaign.* – The DSWD, NCIP, PRC, CSC and the Supreme Court of the Philippines, in cooperation with the Philippine Information Agency (PIA), is hereby mandated to conduct an annual IEC campaign in order to inform the people of the procedures and guidelines in availing the benefits of this Act.

SEC 7. *Reportorial Requirement.* For purposes of determining the effectiveness and social impact of the provisions of this Act, the DSWD, NCIP, PRC, CSC and the Supreme Court of the Philippines shall submit an annual report to both Houses of Congress indicating therewith the number of parties who benefited from this Act.

SEC 8. *Repealing Clause.* – All laws, decrees, orders, rules and regulations or other issuances or parts thereof inconsistent with the provisions of this Act are hereby repealed and modified accordingly.

SEC 9. *Separability Clause.* – If any provision or part hereof is held invalid or unconstitutional, the same shall not affect the validity and effectivity of other provisions.

SEC 10. *Effectivity Clause.* – This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its publication in the Official Gazette or in any newspaper of general circulation.

Approved,