

Republic of the Philippines  
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES  
Quezon City

SEVENTEENTH CONGRESS  
First Regular Session

HOUSE BILL NO. **2539**

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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Introduced by **HON. GUS S. TAMBUNTING**

The bill is filed pursuant to the Policy of the State in giving priority to education, in fostering patriotism and nationalism, accelerate social progress and promote total human liberation and development (Section 17, Article II of the 1987 Constitution). More importantly, it has been mandated in our constitution that for the protection and promotion of the right of all citizens to quality education at all levels, the State shall take appropriate steps in making education accessible to all (Section 1, Article XIV). Thus, the State is enjoined to establish and maintain a system of subsidies and other incentives which shall be available to deserving students in both public and private schools especially to the under-privileged (Section 2(3), Article XIV).

In making education including tertiary level accessible to all Filipinos, Republic Act No. 7722 otherwise known as the Higher Education Act of 1994 has declared as State Policy the protection, fostering and promotion of the right of all citizen to affordable quality education at all level. In addition, the State shall take appropriate steps in ensuring that education shall be accessible to all.

In response thereto, the 15<sup>th</sup> Congress has finalized House Bill 6577 which aims to make higher education accessible to all by eradicating the first hindrance, that is, the entry level. This is true considering that entrance examinations are among the prohibitive costs for any student in gaining a college degree. This bill seeks to provide for free entrance examination in all State Universities and Colleges, local colleges and universities as well as in all private universities and colleges to deserving and qualified students. In the end, even the under privileged shall be given the ample hope in achieving a college education towards the promise of a brighter future. For that matter, this bill is being re-filed to continue the mandate of our constitution in making education truly accessible to all Filipinos.

Hence, the passage of this bill is earnestly sought.



**GUS S. TAMBUNTING**

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HOUSE BILL NO. 2539

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**AN ACT**

**GRANTING FREE COLLEGE ENTRANCE EXAMINATIONS TO GRADUATING HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS, HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATES, COLLEGE ENTRANTS OR TRANSFEREES APPLYING FOR ADMISSION IN STATE UNIVERSITIES AND COLLEGES AND LOCAL COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES AND TO THE UNDERPRIVILEGED PUBLIC HIGHSCHOOL STUDENTS BELONGING TO THE TOP TEN PERCENT (10%) OF THE GRADUATING CLASS APPLYING FOR ADMISSION IN PRIVATE HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS.**

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 College Entrance Examination Act".

SECTION 2. *Declaration of Policy.* - It is hereby declared the policy of the state to expand and further democratize access to quality education at the college level by instituting mechanisms that protect the rights of underprivileged but bright and deserving high school graduates.

The exemption from the imposition of entrance examination fees is one such mechanism that will ensure that underprivileged but bright and deserving high school graduates are given adequate assistance and equal opportunity to pursue their dreams of obtaining a college education.

SECTION 3. *Definition of Terms.* - For purposes of this act, the following terms shall mean:

(a) *College entrance examinations* refer to examinations required by higher education institutions or graduating high school students or high school graduates as one of the criteria for determining admissions to a four (4)-year or five (5)-year college degree program in the said educational institutions.

(b) *Underprivileged public high school graduates* refer to public high school students who belong to the top ten percent (10%) of the graduating class and whose parents live below the poverty line or belong to the poorest of the poor, as determined by the National

Economic and Development Authority (NEDA) and the National Household Targeting System of the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD).

(c) *Higher Education Institute (HEI)* refer to an educational institution that is legally authorized to offer a program of education leading to the conferment of a degree.

SECTION 4. *Coverage.* - All state universities and colleges (SUCs) and local colleges and universities (LCUs) offering degree-granting programs are hereby required to provide free college entrance examinations to graduating high school students, high school graduates, college entrants and transferees who are applying for college admission.

All private colleges, Universities or institutions of higher education or degree-granting programs are hereby required to provide free entrance examinations to underprivileged public high school students belonging to the top ten percent (10%) of the graduating class and who are applying for college admission.

SECTION 5. *Qualification Requirements for the Free College Entrance Examination Beneficiaries in SUCs and LCUs.* - To be eligible to take the free college entrance examination in an SUC or LCU, and applicant must be a natural-born Filipino citizen and a graduating high school student or high school graduate, college entrant or transferee and intends to enrol in any public HEI.

SECTION 6. *Qualification Requirements for Free College Entrance Examination Beneficiaries in Private HEIs.* - To be eligible to take the free college entrance examination in a private HEI, an applicant must:

- (a) Be a natural-born Filipino citizen;
- (b) Be enrolled in or have graduated from a public high school; and
- (c) Belong to the top ten percent (10%) of the graduating class as *Provided, however;* That the applicant's parents or guardians live below the poverty line as determined by the NEDA and the DSWD.

SECTION 7. *Penalties.* - Any HEI official or employee and other concerned individuals found guilty of violating the provisions of this Act shall suffer the penalty of *prision correccional* or imprisonment from six (6) months and one (1) day to six (6) years and a fine of Seven hundred fifty thousand pesos (P750,000.00).

In additional, Commission on Higher Education (CHED) may impose disciplinary sanctions against any HEI official or employee violating the provisions of this Act pursuant to Section 8 of Republic Act NO. 7722, otherwise known as the "High Education Modernization Act 1994".

SECTION 8. *Implementing Rules and Regulations.* - The CHED, in coordination with the DepED, the Philippine Association of the state Universities and colleges (PASUC), the Coordinating Council of Private Educational Associations (COCOPEA) and the Association of Local Colleges and Universities (ALCU), shall issue the necessary rules and regulations for the effective implementation of this Act.

SECTION 9. *Separability clause.* - If any provision of this Act is declared unconstitutional or invalid, the other sanctions or provisions not otherwise affected shall continue to be in full force and effect.

SECTION 10. *Repealing Clause.* - All laws, executive orders, decrees, instructions, rules and regulations contrary to or inconsistent with any provision of this Act are hereby amended, repealed or modified accordingly.

SECTION 11. - *Effectivity Clause.* - This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its publication in the Official Gazette.

Approved,