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P.S. Resolution No. 1452

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Introduced by Senator Cynthia A. Villar

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**RESOLUTION**

**DIRECTING THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE AND FOOD TO INVESTIGATE, IN AID OF LEGISLATION, THE CURRENT STATE OF ACEF SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM IN LIGHT OF REPORTS AND COMPLAINTS THAT THE STUDENTS WHO APPLIED FOR SCHOLARSHIP GRANTS IN SCHOOL YEAR 2014 – 2015 HAVE NOT BEEN PAID THEIR SCHOLARSHIP ENTITLEMENTS BY GOVERNMENT**

**WHEREAS**, Article XIV, Section 1 of the Philippine Constitution expressly states and mandates that "The State shall protect and promote the right of all citizens to quality education at all levels, and shall take appropriate steps to make such education accessible to all;"

**WHEREAS**, Article XIV, Section 3 of the Philippine Constitution provides that "The State shall establish and maintain a system of scholarship grants, student loan programs, subsidies, and other incentives which shall be available to deserving students in both public and private schools, especially to the underprivileged;"

**WHEREAS**, the share of agriculture employment is 12.1 million or a total of 32.3% of the labor force, while the average age of the Filipino farmer is placed at 59 years old, and most of the young people are migrating to urban centers to seek jobs, leaving farms behind;

**WHEREAS**, many young people find agriculture less attractive as a profession as it is labor intensive and not profitable compared to what white collar jobs offer;

**WHEREAS**, if agriculture as a profession is not promoted, food security and widened rural poverty can be our biggest problem;

**WHEREAS**, the cost of attending college for a college degree is prohibitive to many students because of their station in life, and, that by finding, applying for, and receiving scholarship is essential to ensure that a mechanism is in place to give access to promote an empowered society.

**WHEREAS**, in 2010, the Commission on Higher Education issued Memorandum Order No. 32, encouraging students to enroll in undersubscribed programs but are considered Priority Disciplines, or fields of study that will be the focus for growth and are seen as vital in the country's development. These include, among others, Agriculture, Forestry, Fisheries, and Veterinary Medicine;

**WHEREAS**, Congress passed Republic Act (R.A.) No. 8178 – "An Act Replacing Quantitative Import Restrictions on Agricultural Products, Except Rice, with Tariffs, Creating the Agricultural Competitiveness Enhancement Fund, and For Other Purposes." The Law created the Agricultural Competitiveness Enhancement Fund,

which shall consists of all duties collected from the importation of agricultural products under the minimum access volume mechanism;

**WHEREAS**, R. A. No. 9496, or "An Act to Extend the Utilization Period of the Agricultural Competitiveness Enhancement Fund," amended R. A. No. 8178. It provided that the Fund shall continue to be set aside up to 2015, after which the collection of duties from the MAV mechanism shall terminate;

**WHEREAS**, the Law further provides that the Fund shall be set aside and earmarked for the protection of farmers against unfair trade practices; and for the increased productivity of farmers by providing the necessary support services. The Fund shall be distributed, as follows: 70% for agri-based production and post-production, and processing activities, 20% for research and development and commercialization of such, and 10% to be used for the funding of a comprehensive scholarship program for agriculture, forestry, fisheries, and veterinary medicine education;

**WHEREAS**, to implement the ACEF Scholarship Program, the DA issued Department Administrative Order (DAO) No. 9 (series of 2009). The DAO imposed documentary requirements that need to be submitted by the students in applying for the scholarship grant and by the educational institutions where the students are taking their programs;

**WHEREAS**, in 2009, the Department of Agriculture started implementing the ACEF scholarship program with its first batch of recipients (Batch I);

**WHEREAS**, in 2011, the Department issued DAO No. 13 (series of 2011) to amend DAO No. 9 (series of 2009);

**WHEREAS**, for School Year 2014, covering ACEF Scholarship Batch V, it was reported that as of June 2015, there are 1,130 scholars in 126 participating state universities/colleges and institutions;

**WHEREAS**, out of the 1,130 scholars, no one was reported to have been paid or given support; and out of the 126 participating schools, 31 schools were unable to complete the documentary requirements, 81 schools have yet to submit memorandum of agreements of the supported grantees, and 14 schools were not able to submit any requirement;

**WHEREAS**, the failure to submit the documentary requirements as required by DAO No. 9 (2009), as amended by DAO No. 13 (2011), has resulted to the non-payment of the entitlements of the students, resulting to non-acceptance to enroll, inability to take examinations, or hindered from obtaining their school credentials, unless they settle their financial obligations;

**WHEREAS**, there is also a need to review the performance of the ACEF Scholarship Program since its implementation in 2009, and determine whether all the grantees of the first four batches were provided with their scholarship entitlements;

**WHEREAS**, in view of the foregoing, there is a need to reconcile the intentions of government of providing access to quality agricultural education, raising rural income, ensure food security, global competitiveness, and increased sustainability and resilience vis-à-vis restrictive policies and directives, and poor implementation and coordination between and among the implementing agencies on the ACEF Scholarship Program for the poor but deserving future farmers of our country;

**WHEREAS**, corrective measures should be crafted and remedial actions must be undertaken to address the problem/concerns affecting this Program;

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED** by the Philippine Senate to direct the Senate Committee on Agriculture and Food to investigate, in aid of legislation, the current state of ACEF Scholarship Program in light of reports and complaints that the students who applied for scholarship grants in school year 2014-2015 have not been paid their scholarship entitlements by government.

*Adopted,*

  
**CYNTHIA A. VILLAR**