

NINETEENTH CONGRESS OF THE)
REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES)
First Regular Session)



Senate
Office of the Secretary

23 MAR 30 P3:52

SENATE

S. No. 2055

RECEIVED BY: _____

Introduced by Senator Robinhood C. Padilla

AN ACT
GRANTING FREE TERTIARY AGRICULTURAL EDUCATION, AND OTHER
RELATED COURSES TO ALL DEPENDENT CHILDREN OF QUALIFIED
INDIGENT FARMERS, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES

EXPLANATORY NOTE

The agricultural sector has long been considered the backbone of the Philippine economy. The sector plays a significant role in the country's economic development, accounting for around 9% of the country's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and providing employment to more than 20% of the country's labor force. Despite this, the sector has been experiencing a continuous decline in its share of total employment, with the Philippine Statistical Authority (PSA) reporting a decrease from 24.5% (9.7 million) in October 2020 to 22.5% (10.6 million) in October 2022.

One of the major issues plaguing the agricultural sector is the declining interest of students to enroll in agricultural courses. In recent years, the enrollment in agriculture courses in the Philippines has significantly decreased, with fewer students choosing to pursue degrees in this field. According to the Commission on Higher Education (CHED), from 2016 to 2021, the number of enrollees in agriculture courses in state colleges and universities dropped by 34.6 percent, while the number of graduates decreased by 28.4 percent. This decline in the number of students enrolling in agricultural courses is a cause for concern, as it indicates a lack of interest among the youth to pursue careers in the agricultural sector.

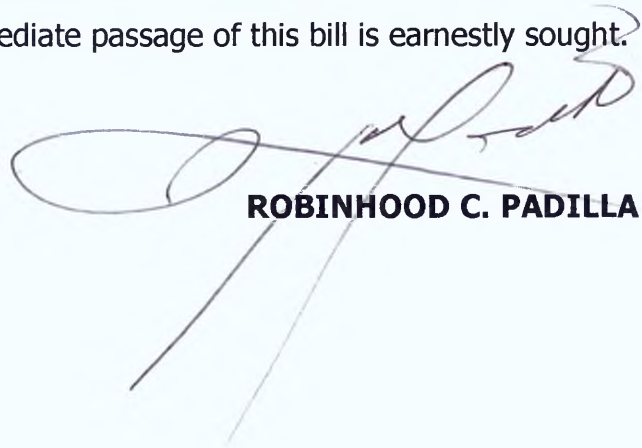
The decline in student interest in agricultural courses is a concerning trend, given the critical role of agriculture in the country's development. The lack of interest can be attributed to various factors, including the perception that agricultural work is

physically demanding and low-paying. Moreover, the agriculture industry is not seen as a desirable career path for the younger generation, who often prefer more "glamorous" jobs in the corporate world.

In light of these challenges, it is crucial to encourage more students to enroll in agricultural courses to ensure the sector's continued growth and development. This proposed measure seeks to address the issue by granting free tertiary agricultural education to the dependents of qualified indigent farmers. The measure aims to incentivize the younger generation to consider pursuing a career in agriculture, by providing them with accessible education and training on the latest agricultural principles and techniques.

Aside from promoting sound agricultural development in the country, the proposed measure will also uplift and motivate agricultural research, which is crucial to the sector's quest for development. By providing free tertiary agricultural education to the dependents of qualified indigent farmers, the state can help address the issue of declining student interest in agricultural courses and ensure that the sector remains competitive and sustainable in the long run.

In light of the foregoing, immediate passage of this bill is earnestly sought.



ROBINHOOD C. PADILLA

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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 Free Tertiary*
2 *Agricultural Education Act.*"

3 Sec. 2. *Declaration of Policy.* - It is the declared policy of the State to promote
4 sound agricultural development in the country and to achieve global competitiveness
5 in the agricultural sector. Towards this end, education and trainings on Agriculture
6 shall be encouraged among the youth to inculcate the latest agricultural principles and
7 techniques. The State, therefore, shall extend the avenue for this learning process by
8 providing accessible education on agriculture and other related courses.

9 Sec. 3. *Definition of Terms.* - As used in this Act, the following terms shall be
10 defined as:

11 a. *Qualified Dependent Children* - refers to the children of indigent farmers
12 who are enrolled or about to enroll in State Colleges and Universities where
13 Agriculture and its related courses are offered.

14 b. *Registered Indigent Farmers* - are those indigent individuals whose sole
15 source of income is agriculture, who actually cultivate or till the land,
16 whether as owner or lessee of the land, or who actually engage in crop

1 production, livestock and poultry farming, and who are included in the
2 registry of farmers of the Department of Agriculture (DA).

3 *Sec. 4. Free Tertiary Agricultural Education Program.* - The DA, in coordination
4 with the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) shall establish a scholarship
5 program for Tertiary Agricultural Education. Qualified dependent children of registered
6 indigent farmers intending to enroll or already enrolled in agricultural courses or any
7 related field offerings in state colleges and universities shall be exempt from payment
8 of tuition and other school fees and shall be entitled to such other incentives or
9 subsidies, including living and transportation allowance, as may be granted in
10 accordance with such rules and regulations to be promulgated to carry out the
11 provisions of this Act: *Provided*, That within one (1) year from the completion of the
12 course, the scholar shall render a return to service work in the local agriculture sector
13 for a period of not less than one (1) year.

14 *Sec. 5. Conditions of the Scholarship Grant.* - The *Free Tertiary Agricultural*
15 *Education Program* shall have the following conditionalities:

- 16 a. The scholar may be allowed, for valid reasons preventing his enrolment,
17 to defer availment of the scholarship and file a leave of absence for a
18 period not exceeding one (1) school year; and
19 b. The scholar shall receive and continue to enjoy the benefits of the
20 scholarship until the completion of the course.

21 *Sec. 6. Information Dissemination.* - The DA shall conduct regular information
22 dissemination and recruitment with regard to the *Free Tertiary Agricultural Education*
23 *Program* to encourage qualified dependent children to become agricultural scholars.

24 *Sec. 7. Appropriations.* - The amount necessary to carry out the implementation
25 of this Act shall be charged against the current appropriations of DA and CHED.
26 Thereafter, the amount necessary for the continuous implementation of the Free
27 Tertiary Agricultural Education as provided for under this Act shall be included in the
28 Universal Access to Quality Tertiary Education program of CHED in the annual General
29 Appropriations Act.

30 *Sec. 8. Implementing Rules and Regulations.* - Within six (6) months after the
31 effectivity of this Act, the DA and CHED, in consultation with various SUCs shall

1 promulgate the necessary guidelines, rules, and regulations for the proper
2 implementation of the provisions of this Act.

3 *Sec. 9. Separability Clause.* - If any provision of this Act, or parts thereof, is
4 declared unconstitutional, the same shall not affect the validity and effectivity of the
5 other portions.

6 *Sec. 10. Repealing Clause.* - All laws, executive orders, presidential decrees,
7 implementing rules and regulations inconsistent with this Act are hereby repealed or
8 modified accordingly.

9 *Sec. 11. Effectivity.* - This Act shall take effect fifteen (15) days after its
10 publication in the Official Gazette or in two (2) newspapers of general circulation.

11 Approved,