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S.B. No. 2834

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(In substitution of Senate Bill Nos. 1538, 2228 and 2691,
taking into consideration House Bill No. 9588)

Prepared by the Committees on Environment, Natural Resources and Climate Change; Higher, Technical and Vocational Education; Basic Education; and Finance with Senators Revilla, Jr., Villar (C.) and Tulfo as authors

AN ACT
REQUIRING ALL GRADUATING SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL AND COLLEGE
LEVEL STUDENTS TO PLANT AT LEAST TWO (2) TREES EACH, AS A CIVIC
DUTY FOR ENVIRONMENT PROTECTION AND CLIMATE CHANGE
MITIGATION, AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS THEREFOR

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 "Tree Planting Legacy
2 of Graduates Act of 2024".

3 Sec. 2. *Declaration of Policy.* — It is hereby declared the policy of the State to
4 protect and advance the right of the Filipino people to a balanced and healthful
5 ecology in accord with the rhythm and harmony of nature. It also recognizes the
6 vital role of the youth in nation-building, and shall promote and protect their
7 physical, moral, spiritual, intellectual, and social well-being. It shall inculcate in the
8 youth patriotism and nationalism, and encourage their involvement in public and
9 civic affairs.

10 It is incumbent upon the State to address and mitigate the long-term adverse
11 effects posed by global warming and climate change, while recognizing the role of

the youth in nation-building and encouraging their public and civic participation through tree planting programs.

Towards this end, planting trees and cultivating thriving ecosystems not only promote ecological stability and conservation, but also foster community-based youth engagement and participation. Guided by the principle of intergenerational responsibility, the critical role of the youth in promoting environmental awareness and vigilance in addressing environmental issues makes them environmental stewards for generations to come.

Sec. 3. *Definition of Terms.* — For purposes of this Act:

- a. *Allied Activities* refer to activities which support or complement tree planting, providing a holistic learning approach and experience for graduating students. It include activities such as, but not limited to, producing seeds, clearing planting sites, digging holes, weeding, potting of seedlings, composting for the production of fertilizer, watering, maintaining of nursery, putting up fences to protect the seedlings from grazing, trampling, and other potential damage caused by animals, and such other activities as may be related to or in preparation for growing a tree and increasing its chance of survival;
- b. *Graduating Students in High School* refer to students enrolled in senior high school at Grade 12 level;
- c. *Graduating Students in College* refer to students enrolled in the last year of their undergraduate course;
- d. *Indigenous Species* refer to species or subspecies of wildlife naturally occurring or has naturally established population in the country; and
- e. *Planting Sites* refer to areas that possess the characteristics appropriate and necessary in planting and cultivating the growth of healthy trees, which is evaluated based on soil quality, climate conditions, topography, biodiversity, accessibility, and other safety and environmental hazards.

1 Sec. 4. *Tree planting as a Pre-Requisite for Graduation.* — All graduating
2 students in senior high school and college in the Philippines shall plant at least two
3 (2) trees each as a pre-requisite for their graduation.

4 *Provided,* That, persons with disability (PWD) shall be exempted from the
5 requirement only if their impairment is of a nature that renders them fully and
6 effectively incapacitated from participating in the tree planting activities. *Provided,*
7 *however,* That the responsibility of the exempted PWD student from planting at least
8 two (2) trees each shall be assumed either by the educational institution's respective
9 teaching or non-teaching staff, and/or any other volunteer graduating student.

10 Sec. 5. *Location.* — The trees to be planted under this Act shall be located in
11 planting sites which are determined to be suitable by the Department of
12 Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) and the Local Government Units (LGUs),
13 in close coordination with the concerned educational institutions, preferably within
14 the municipality, city, or province, where the educational institution is located.

15 *Provided,* however, in the absence of a suitable planting site within the
16 municipality, city, or province where the educational institution is located, tree
17 planting activities may be conducted in suitable planting sites in nearby municipality,
18 city, or province, as may be applicable.

19 Sec. 6. *Priority Species.* — The species of trees to be planted should be
20 appropriate to the location, climate, and topography of the area, prioritizing
21 Indigenous Species. All priority Indigenous Species shall be determined by the
22 Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR).

23 Sec. 7. *Partner Agencies and Stakeholders.* — The DENR, in partnership with
24 the Department of Education (DepEd), the Commission on Higher Education (CHED),
25 the Department of Agriculture (DA), the Department of the Interior and Local
26 Government (DILG), and Local Government Units (LGUs), shall ensure the effective
27 and efficient implementation of the provisions of this Act.

28 For this purpose, the joint responsibilities of the aforementioned government
29 agencies and stakeholders are as follows:

1. Information dissemination in connection with the tree planting activities,-including allied activities;
2. Coordination among different agencies and stakeholders;
3. Identification and assessment of planting sites, ensuring that all necessary standards and requirements are met; and
4. Monitoring and evaluation.

Sec. 8. Specific Roles and Functions of Agencies and Educational Institutions.

— To ensure the effective and efficient implementation of this Act, the following shall be the specific functions of the following agencies:

A. The DENR shall:

1. Identify priority species and planting sites suitable for the tree planting activities which would be performed within protected areas (PAs), forestlands, and other lands of the public domain, and develop a list from which the DepEd and CHED shall select;
2. Conduct survey and mapping of areas where mass or collective tree planting activities can be performed;
3. Provide the seedlings required for the planting sites;
4. Maintain a seedling bank or nursery, which will serve as a ready source of seedlings to be provided to educational institutions; and
5. Provide other technical assistance as may be requested by the DepEd, CHED, and other educational institutions.

B. The DepEd shall:

1. Conduct information dissemination and campaigns in its field offices and senior high schools regarding tree planting requirements for graduating students;
2. Include the tree planting activities, as well as allied activities, in the school calendar;
3. Direct the concerned educational institutions to mobilize the graduating students to comply with the tree planting requirement for graduation;

4. Maintain a list of students who have completed the required tree planting activities;
5. Monitor and regulate the operation of tree planting activities, including allied activities;
6. Prepare and submit reports of the actual number of trees planted per graduating batch of students to DENR;
7. Coordinate with the DENR, DA, DILG and other relevant government agencies to provide hazard, risk, and safety training to supervising teachers and coordinators; and
8. Perform other duties and functions necessary to accomplish the mandate of this Act.

C. The CHED shall:

1. Conduct information dissemination and campaigns in its regional offices and Higher Educational Institutions (HEIs) regarding tree planting requirements for graduating students;
2. Direct the concerned HEIs to mobilize the graduating students to comply with the tree planting requirement for graduation;
3. Maintain a list of students who have completed the required tree planting activity;
4. Prepare and submit reports of the actual number of trees planted per graduating batch of students to DENR;
5. Coordinate with the DENR, DA, DILG, and other relevant government agencies to provide hazard, risk, and safety training to supervising teachers and coordinators; and
6. Perform other duties and functions necessary to accomplish the mandate of this Act.

D. The DA shall:

1. Facilitate the production and distribution of fruit trees and tree-based high value crops; and

2. Perform other duties and functions necessary to accomplish the mandate of this Act.

E. The DILG through the LGUs shall:

1. Identify and recommend to the DENR the planting sites within the LGU's jurisdiction in accordance with their existing plan, which shall include, but shall not be limited to green spaces, roadsides, public school grounds, gardens or other available areas within the school premises, idle or vacant public lands, and public parks in urban and rural areas, as may be relevant;
2. Provide the necessary logistics in coordination with partner agencies and educational institutions; and
3. Perform other duties and functions necessary to accomplish the mandate of this Act.

F. Educational Institutions shall:

1. Plan and schedule the conduct of tree planting activities, including allied activities every academic year;
2. Mobilize the graduating students to comply with the tree planting requirement for graduation;
3. Coordinate with appropriate partner agencies for the provision of seedlings, scheduled conduct of tree planting activities, including allied activities, and other necessary preparations;
4. Issue Certificate of Compliance to graduating students who successfully complied with the tree planting requirement;
5. Prepare and submit reports of the actual number of graduating students who successfully complied with the tree planting requirement to DepED or CHED, as applicable;
6. Ensure the safety and welfare of the graduating students during the tree planting activities, including allied activities; and

7. Perform other roles and functions in connection with the implementation of this Act as ordered by DepED or CHED, as applicable.

Sec. 9. *Role of Private Sectors.* — Private sectors may allot their private land for tree planting activities, including allied activities, in coordination with the educational institutions: *Provided*, That the private sector shall allocate all resources pertinent to the implementation of this Act.

Sec. 10. *Recognition, Certification, and Incentives.* — Recognitions, certifications, and incentives shall be given to top-performing educational institutions, under a criteria prepared by the DENR, in partnership with other agencies, to promote environmental awareness, encourage active participation and ensure the effective and efficient implementation of this Act.

Sec. 11. *Mandatory Review and Reporting; Monitoring and Evaluation.* — The DepEd and CHED shall conduct a mandatory review and provide recommendations on the implementation of the tree planting activities, including allied activities, every five (5) years and report on the progress of such activities to the DENR from time to time as may be necessary. The DENR shall be the principal agency tasked to monitor and evaluate the growth of the planted trees.

Sec. 12. *Implementing Rules and Regulations.* — Within ninety (90) days after its effectivity, the DENR, DILG, DepEd, CHED, and DA, in consultation with other agencies, shall promulgate and issue the implementing rules and regulations (IRR) necessary to implement the provisions of this Act.

Sec. 13. *Appropriations.* — The funds necessary to carry out the provisions of this Act shall be included in the budgets of the implementing departments or agencies in the annual General Appropriations Act (GAA).

Sec. 14. *Separability Clause.* — If any provision of this Act is declared unconstitutional, the remainder thereof not otherwise affected shall remain in full force and effect.

1 Sec. 15. *Repealing Clause.* — All laws, decrees, executive orders, rules and
2 regulations, and other issuances or parts thereof which are contrary to or
3 inconsistent with this Act are hereby repealed, amended, or modified accordingly.

4 Sec. 16. *Effectivity.* — This Act shall take effect after fifteen (15) days
5 following the completion of its publication in the *Official Gazette*, or in a newspaper
6 of general circulation.

7 *Approved,*