



24 May 2017

REPRESENTATIVE ANN K. HOFER

Chairperson
Committee on Higher and Technical Education
House of Representatives
Quezon City

Dear **Chairperson Hofer**:

This refers to House Bill No. 181 or "An Act Instituting Free College Education for Indigent Students" filed by Representative Vincent P. Crisologo.

Our Department supports the intention of the bill to institute free tertiary education for students coming from indigent families as a step towards eradicating poverty.

To contribute to the bill's enhancement, we are recommending the following:

1. On Section 2, Declaration of Policy: Clarify the percentage of indigent students who shall be admitted free of tuition fee as against the population of paying students. This section states "at least 10%" while the Explanatory Note indicates "not exceeding 10%".
2. On Section 3, Definition of Terms: The term "indigent" is usually equated with "poor", with the latter being defined "as individuals and families whose income fall below the poverty threshold as defined by the National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA) and/or cannot afford in a sustained manner to provide their minimum basic needs of food, health, education, housing and other essential amenities of life under Republic Act No. 8425.
3. On Section 6, Qualifications of a Beneficiary:
 - a. Further review item a especially the phrase "immediately preceding the next school semester" as this may limit the application of those who have long stopped schooling or postponed their plans for college education due to financial circumstances.
 - b. Restate item d as this may prevent children in conflict with the law (CICL) from pursuing a better life through free tertiary education.

4. On Section 10, Powers and Functions of the Regional Scholarship Boards: Add as one of the functions the management of complaints / grievances from the targeted students.
5. To assess how the provisions of this bill will complement/duplicate those of Republic Act No. 10648 or the "Iskolar ng Bayan Act of 2014" and Republic Act No. 10687 or the "Unified Student Financial Assistance System for Tertiary Education (UniFAST) Act".

Thank you.

Very truly yours,


JUDY M. TAGUIWALO
Secretary