

15 December 2017

REPRESENTATIVE ANN K. HOFER

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

Dear **Chairperson Hofer**:

The **Department of Social Welfare and Development supports House Bill No. 5608** entitled: An Act Creating an Advanced Studies Development Program for Exceptional Employees from the Government and the Private Sector and for Other Purposes or the "**Pensionado Act of 2017**", introduced by Representative Alfred Vargas.

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

1. **Sec. 1 – Short Title**

To change the Short Title to "**Advanced Studies and Leadership Act**".
Pensionado might bring confusion as it may mean Senior Citizens or those retired employees receiving pension from the government.

2. **Sec. 3 – Definition of Terms**

To include definition for "**Exceptional Employees**".

3. **Sec. 6 – Number of Pensionados and Length of Grant vis-à-vis Section 4 – Establishment of a Program**

To **increase the number of slots for scholarship to maximize talents**. Twenty-four (24) *Pensionados* might be a small number considering the existing and available scholarship grants given by the government alone to qualified employees, not to mention grants from private sectors.

4. **Sec. 5 – Establishment of a National Secretariat; Functions and Composition**

4.1 To change the name of the "National Secretariat" to "**National Committee**".

4.2 To include these as functions of the National Committee:

- a. **Oversee the implementation of this Act**, in coordination with the Commission on Higher Education (CHED), Civil Service Commission (CSC), National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA), Department of Trade and Industry (DTI), Department of Science and Technology (DOST), representatives from Non-Government Organization (NGO) focused on providing Scholarship Program, and the private sector.
- b. **Develop advocacy materials relative to the provisions of this Act**, in coordination with the concerned National Government Agencies (NGAs), NGO, and private sector.

c. Also conduct **monitoring and evaluation of the Program implementation.**

5 **Sec. 8 – Qualifications**

On letter (d), to **develop a qualification rating tool** for employees who **“demonstrated leadership and proven exceptional performance in his/her present work”**.

6 **Sec. 11 – Program Funding**

- ⊕ To **clarify why the employer would only pay the salary, allowance and other benefits of the Pensionados for one (1) year period** when **Section 10** (Assistance to Grantees) provides that a *Pensionado* would be entitled up to three (3) years of leave with pay, including allowances and other benefits. We recommend **reconciling these two conflicting provisions.**

Related to this, **how will the Program assure the cooperation of the Private Sector on this endeavor?** These companies are profit-oriented and income generating. Payment of salaries, allowances, and benefits for scholars might be seen as a liability.

- ⊕ The **funding for the Program will be sourced from the employer, the National Government, and/or from the hosts’ government/universities/research institutions/corporations.** Thus, any Program recipient who failed to complete the course should reimburse not only the sponsoring agency or company as stated under **Section 12** (Service Obligation), but also the National Government, if applicable.

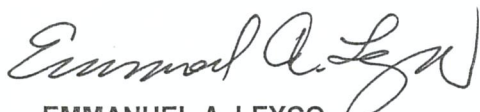
7 **Sec. 12 – Service Obligation**

- ⊕ To establish a **clear mechanism of Return of Investment (ROI) for self-employed personnel** since the proposed measure includes “self-employed” to undertake advanced studies in a branch of science, technology or related field of learning.
- ⊕ The **Implementing Rules and Regulations (IRR) should discuss in detail the different continuing activities** that the *Pensionados* should do upon completion. The service obligation of the *Pensionados* **should not only be limited to the conduct of seminars or training sessions** for employees of the government and private sectors on topics related to the course or training he/she has completed.

For consideration of the Committee.

Thank you.

Very truly yours,



EMMANUEL A. LEYCO
Officer-in-Charge